There Are Children Here: Examining Black Childhood in Rosenwald Schools of Pickens County Alabama

(1940-1969)

by

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Dedication

To God, who put a song in my heart.

This dissertation is dedicated to my ancestors, who deserve monuments. Their blood is my blood and I know they have called me to this place, this time, to see their world as my own. The blood is my love and my love is etched, in little flakes of words on these pages.

…to my Mommy,

thank you for going back with me, to Alabama. Thank you for your strength, your care, your support, and Spats after a long work week. Thank you for your deep love of people and community and justice. Those things are in my blood because of you. I love you deep, Mommy. You are my gift.

…to my Dad, thank you for showing me the world, for gifting me your fire, for letting me ride shot gun, for challenging my thoughts, for showing me the arts, and for making me watch history channel, and for Gyros up North on Saturday nights. Those things are in my blood because of you. I love you deep, Daddy. You are my gift.

…the elders gone on and still here,

…to my Grandmother, Ollie Rose Neal Spruill who kept sending me 7:11 throughout this whole process. I will keep searching, Gran. I love you and wish I would've known all you had done in Pickens while you were here. I give you beauty for ashes. I love you deep. You are my gift.

…to my Grandmother, Prennie Ransom Andrews, all that I see that is beautiful comes from you. Thank you for giving me my love of *things*. These materials are in my blood because of you. I love you deep. You are my gift.

…**to my Aunt Jean,** thank you for always telling me boldly, to shine

…to my Aunt Sylvia Neal Richardson, you have resurrected the South in my soul, you have given me the answers I was searching for, you are the bridge in my blood, the pistol in my purse, and the winds that race my hair up and down the roads there in Ethelsville. I love you deep. You are my gift.

***For* my Ella,** you are my heart, all that I am, all this blood in my veins is for you. I lay this history at your feet, daughter, that you may ALWAYS know who you are and to whom you belong. I thank you for taking this ride with me. I love you deep, deep, deep. You are my gift that keeps giving.

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It takes a village. I have been so blessed with an incredible village in the spirit world and here on this earthly plane. I am so grateful to God, who walks with me and orders my steps – who understands the desires of my heart and has granted me a playground to explore my curiosities among and with a beautiful group of souls. I can't describe how I have felt a divine ordering around this project, seeded when I was just 17 years old when I visited my ancestral grounds for the first time. At that time, I thought I would return to learn more about this place. I had no idea what would unfold. I can only speculate that God knew, and so … all things have been just as a seed grows into a flower my search has found a page.

To my daughter, Ella Niani Kazembe.
This legacy is yours to hold.
May our days in Alabama settle in your bones and remind you who and who's you are.
May your steps stride wide propelled with the spirits of our ancestors.
May your life be ordered, bold, graceful, and filled with love.
I thank you for taking this journey with me. For laying your hands next to mine in the soil, on the wood, cutting and molding and dreaming with me.
I will be there for your dreams too.
I am thankful for the beautiful girl you are.
You are my deepest and boldest dream,
I'm glad you answered my call.
Thank you.
I love you.
Deep and always, across all life times.

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I must apologize for the brevity of my thanks; I can express how much I have been blessed by the University of Michigan School of Education community and I will remember these days with such fondness and awe. I feel like I've been in a whirlwind, tidal wave, tsunami of goodness and challenges and obstacles and delights and frailties and strengths. I have laughed, and loved, and grappled, and coffee'd (a lot). I have pondered so many perplexing, hard, and beautiful things too. I have been so blessed to commit myself so pointedly to thinking among people who have done the same. I pray we remain a sticky web, no matter where the winds blow, we ain't comin' apart. Ashé.

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With love and deep gratitude to my Alabama once-children, and my Neal-Richardson Family. To the Locke Sisters and the Pickensville Schoolhouse. The journey continues…

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Abstract

Research examining Black education during slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow have either emphasized whites' and Blacks' interpretations of the warrant and function of Black education or documented empirically the inequitable conditions of Black schools and the role and contributions of Black educators and community members. In this scholarship, Black children have been implicitly present through whites' and Blacks' opposing versions of whether and for what purpose Blacks should be educated. Alternatively, Black children have been empirically present inasmuch as their presence enabled the documentation of inequitable educational conditions (e.g., low per-pupil-expenditure; high student-teacher ratios) or evidenced the care they received from Black teachers and community members. Yet, how Black children experienced childhood or articulated agency in relation to schools is not apparent.

Given this extant gap in the literature and drawing upon critical childhood studies and the concomitant assertion that Black childhood has been unimagined and devalued within the social conception of childhood, my dissertation project provided a one-year ethnohistorical inquiry of former schoolchildren who attended Rosenwald Schools of Pickens County (PCRS), Alabama between 1940 and 1969. Drawing upon the oral histories (n=49) of these former school children (referred herein as "once-children") and material objects (n=2,576) from archives and personal collections, I examined: (a) the experience of Black children in and around PCRS; (b) what these childhood experiences revealed about how Black children may have influenced the culture, organization, or dynamics of these schools; and (c) how in foregrounding Black children's perspectives and materials, we might develop distinct or nuanced understandings of Black

children's experiences and agency in and around pre-Brown segregated schools; and by implication, expand our understanding of Black childhood in this space and time.

Findings reveal conditions that grounded Black children's PCRS related experiences (including physical and spatial burdens associated with the journey to school) -- conditions more suited for adults. However, study participants defied these conditions in ways that animated or reinforced their status as children. While these conditions required Black children to be agentic, their innocence was not eclipsed as adults provided supports and protections that affirmed their status as children.

The once-children recalled that in school they animated their childhood status via their power and agency to play and indulge childish shenanigans; namely, by demonstrating preoccupations, motivations, and behaviors that defined their status of children as opposed to student or adult. As Black children took up liberties to play in (relation to) school, they fulfilled their natural and developmentally appropriate desire to be playful, navigate peer conflicts, negotiate status differences, and engage in social dramas, all in decidedly childish ways. In doing so, they expanded the dynamics and culture of school to include Black childhood. Importantly, children engaged in these developmentally appropriate expressions of agency in clear opposition to adult expectations and boundaries and the norms, expectations, and organization of schools.

In demonstrating how Black once-children in PCRS articulated their childhood status in the aforementioned ways and via robust articulations of human agency, we not only complicate our understanding of Black children's educational experience in de jure segregated schools but expand considerations regarding the purpose of schooling beyond its more instrumental purposes – namely how schooling provides a stage for a wide range of developmental expressions and human agency that have been especially under-analyzed in histories of (Black) education.

Chapter I | Introduction

Scene I: In Search of Black Childhood

The Descendant Researcher

In 1959, my mother (13 years), her siblings (11, 9, and 6), and their parents (my grandparents) left rural Pickens County, Alabama for Chicago. My grandfather, Arthur, was threatened with lynching. My family left everything behind: their home and convenience store (which were both destroyed by arson), church, family members, photographs, and belongings. Additionally, the children left their toys, playmates, and school. During my childhood, I would come to learn this story. With no familial childhood photographs or artifacts, I couldn't imagine my mother, her siblings, or much less my grandparents' childhoods, and, thereby, I couldn't imagine a piece of me. I felt a significant absence: the history of childhood in my family—our beginnings—had been reduced to ashes and seemed undiscoverable.

In 2014, part of this history found me. I learned about the Rosenwald School Program (RSP), whose significance would be historical and personal. The RSP resulted from a partnership that unfolded between Booker T. Washington, leader of Tuskegee Institute, Julius Rosenwald, founder and owner of Sears and Roebuck Co., and rural Black communities, to build formal schoolhouses – efforts which research has shown endured and gained momentum after the abolition of slavery.[1] The Rosenwald School Program began in 1912 when Booker T.

[1] James D Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1988).

Washington approached Julius Rosenwald for seed funding to support rural African American communities efforts to build school houses in Alabama. Julius Rosenwald, who was a supporter of Tuskegee Institute, agreed to provide match funds that would be joined funding provided by Blacks' and public funding. The Program began in 1912 with six schools in Macon County, Alabama. By 1938, the Program would grow from six schools in Macon County, Alabama to over 5,300 schools throughout the South. Notably, research has shown Julius Rosenwald donated 4 million dollars to the Rosenwald Program, and the African American community (e.g., farmers, sharecroppers, laborers etc.) raised 4.8 million dollars as well as provided labor, materials, and land.[2] By 1916, this momentum spread to Pickens County, where Blacks established the first of six Rosenwald Schools to serve the community's children, which included my mother, grandmother, and other family members.

In summer 2015, I returned to Pickens County as a descendant and doctoral student, searching for Black childhood in and around Rosenwald Schools (RSPs). I searched the local courthouse and libraries but found no reference to RSPs and, thereby, the children who attended these schools. Pickens County School Board minutes revealed documentation of "white" and "colored" schools (including RSPs). Teachers and white students were listed by name. However, Black children were not recorded by name, only numerically. But I knew these *children*; although now adults, my mother, siblings, and grandparents humanized the numbered Black children documented in the board minutes. By my estimation, although aging, this generation's childhoods were still *living* via their memory; and accessible to me via their network of Pickens County Rosenwald School (PCRS) alumni. In seeking to document the experiences of Black

[2] Anderson; Mary S Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South* (University Press of Florida, 2006).

children, and by implication Black childhood, under pre-Brown segregation,[3] a focus on Rosenwald Schools is especially significant because “[i]n 1929 there were 3,052,523 Negro children of school age in fourteen Southern states".[4] By 1938, low estimates indicate one in three Black children attended RSP.[5] I wondered if and how Black children's voices and presence had been previously examined in historical, educational research related to Black education pre-*Brown*, and then more specifically RSPs? These experiences and curiosities inspired my dissertation.

Rationale

Research examining education for Blacks across the eras of slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow,[6] have captured whites and Blacks competing interpretations of the warrant for and

[3] The 1954 landmark Supreme Court decision of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka determined the racial segregation of public schools was unconstitutional for all children. This law ended legal segregation for Black children and children of color more broadly. Prior to this landmark case, Black children (and children of color more broadly) were legal bound by another landmark case, Plessy v. Ferguson law, enacted in 1896 which constitutionally upheld legal segregation in America. Although Plessy touted all citizens were to be separate but equal Blacks and other groups of color were not treated fairly under the law. Instead the law supported the racial inequities and abuses in public institutions and broader society.

[4] Henry Allen Bullock, *History of Negro Education in the South* (JSTOR, 1967), 145.

[5] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 1988.

[6] The Reconstruction Era (1863-1877) is the period in American history following the Civil War when the enslavement of African Americans was abolished, and efforts were made to rebuild and reintegrate the South into the Union. During this time African American freedmen and freedwomen also sought to rebuild from decades of living in the monstrous institution of human slavery. For African Americans, the Reconstruction Era was marked by their struggles and significant strides to pursue their civil and human rights as American citizens (e.g., through legislation, public leadership, self-determination, and education). Although there were efforts to support Blacks advancement into full citizenship during this time (e.g., establishment of the Freedman's Bureau, Blacks elected to public office, etc.) these efforts were met with fierce opposition by whites who sought to keep the status quo. Within just over a decade, whites political, social, and legal resistance to African American advancement led to the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision (1896) which legalized racial segregation by establishing a "separate but

function of Black education.[7] However, Black children have not been the empirical focus. Instead, Black children have been implicitly present through racially opposing versions of whether and for what purpose Blacks should be educated. While whites (i.e., slaveholders, planters, southerners, and Northern philanthropists, reformers, evangelicals, educators, etc.) generally thought Black children *should not* be educated or should receive minimal education,[8]

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equal" public society. David. W. Blight, *Race and Reunion* (Harvard University Press, 2009); Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Vintage, 2013); John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction after the Civil War* (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[7] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 1988; Derek Bell, *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice* (Basic Books, 2008); Mary McLeod Bethune, "The Adaptation of the History of the Negro to the Capacity of the Child," *The Journal of Negro History* 24, no. 1 (January 1, 1939): 9–13, https://doi.org/10.2307/2714492; Mary McLeod Bethune, "How Fare Negro Youth" (Alliance for Guidance of Rural Youth (U.S.), 1937), Alliance for Guidance of Rural Youth (U.S.), Special Collections at Duke University Library, http://search.library.duke.edu/images/icon-Internet%20resource.gif] Internet resource; [http://search.library.duke.edu/images/icon-Manuscript.gif; Horace Mann Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* (University of Alabama Press, 1994); Bullock, *History of Negro Education in the South*; Ronald E Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (Praeger Pub Text, 1980); Ronald E Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2010); Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (Modern Library Classics (Paper, 2000); William Edward Burghardt DuBois, "Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America," *New York: Russell and Russell*, 1935; Michael Fultz, "Teacher Training and African American Education in the South, 1900-1940," *Journal of Negro Education*, 1995, 196–210; Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (Indiana University Press, 2011); Ellis O. Knox, "The Origin and Development of the Negro Separate School," *The Journal of Negro Education* 16, no. 3 (1947): 269, https://doi.org/10.2307/2966333; Karen L. Riley, "'A Toilet in the Middle of the Court House Square': The Summer Teaching Institute of 1915 and the Influence of Booker T. Washington on Negro Teacher Education in Alabama," *Education and Culture* 18, no. 1 (2002): 2–9; Samuel Leonard Smith, *Builders of Goodwill: The Story of the State Agents of Negro Education in the South, 1910 to 1950* (Tennessee Book Company, 1950); Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2009); Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction*; Blight, *Race and Reunion*.

[8] Daniel Aaronson and Bhashkar Mazumder, "The Impact of Rosenwald Schools on Black Achievement," *Journal of Political Economy* 119, no. 5 (2011): 821–88; Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 1988; Bullock, *History of Negro Education in the*

Blacks (i.e., enslaved peoples, freedmen and freedwomen, leaders, educators, the Black community, etc.) thought Black children *should* be educated and that their education should be liberatory.[9] It is through these conceptualizations of Black education that an *imagined* Black child comes into view. The imagined Black child (by whites account) was *(un)agentic* (i.e., unable to be educated because they do not have the capacity to learn or create); *constrainedly-agentic* (i.e., only able to learn inasmuch as their learning would improve their ability to serve their slaveholder); or *dangerously-agentic* (i.e., capable of learning but that learning should be controlled because it posed a threat to white bodies and whites tatus). In contrast, the imagined Black child (by Blacks account) was thought to be an agentic-hope of their race (i.e., one who possessed the aptitude to become educated and the spirit to overcome racial oppression obstacles to advance their race).

Both accounts, white and Black, of how Black children experienced their childhood or articulated their agency in educational spaces or schools is not apparent in this literature. Instead, whites and Blacks discuss an imagined Black child whose presence only becomes apparent inasmuch as whites and Blacks could conceive of Black education. Thus, within this body of literature related to Black education foundations, we have no window into Black children's

South; Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875*; Wilma King, *African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights* (Springer, 2005); King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*.

[9] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 1988; Bethune, "How Fare Negro Youth"; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876*; King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*; Christopher M Span and James D Anderson, "The Quest for 'Book Learning': African American Education in Slavery and Freedom," *A Companion to African American History*, 2005, 295; Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*.

agency as children (and thereby Black childhood) in and around educational spaces or schools as education was developing for Blacks in America.

Across foundations literature where Black children *are* empirically present, their voices and perspective captured via interview data have been used to describe the conditions of school; [10] curriculum and activities;[11] or reveal the professionalism, value and caring approach of Black teachers.[12] Scholars who have conducted extensive research on the RSP have argued that

[10] Ambrose Caliver, "Availability of Education to Negroes in Rural Communities. Bulletin, 1935, No. 12.," *Office of Education, United States Department of the Interior*, 1936; Fultz, "Teacher Training and African American Education in the South, 1900-1940"; Mary S Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South* (University Press of Florida, 2006); Robert A. Margo, *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950: An Economic History* (University of Chicago Press, 1990); Minnie Ruth Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953," 2013; Betty J Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*, vol. 11 (McFarland, 2004); Kara Miles Turner, "' Getting It Straight': Southern Black School Patrons and the Struggle for Equal Education in the Pre-and Post-Civil Rights Eras," *Journal of Negro Education*, 2003, 217–29; Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[11] Mary S Hoffschwelle, "Children of the Rosenwald Schools and the American South," in *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and the Material Culture of Children*, by Marta Gutman and Ning De Coninck-Smith (Rutgers University Press, 2008), 213–32; Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953"; Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*; Emilie Siddle Walker, "Caswell County Training School, 1933–1969: Relationships between Community and School," *Harvard Educational Review* 63, no. 2 (1993): 161–83; Vanessa Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South: 1940-1960," *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 4 (2001): 751–79; Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*, 1996.

[12] Katherine Eriksson, "Access to Schooling and the Black-White Incarceration Gap in the Early 20th Century US South: Evidence from Rosenwald Schools" (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2015), http://www.nber.org/papers/w21727; Tom Hanchett, "Beacons for Black Education in the American South," *Rosenwald Schools* 12 (2004); Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*, 2006; Hoffschwelle, "Children of the Rosenwald Schools and the American South"; Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953"; Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*; Siddle Walker, "Caswell County Training School, 1933–1969: Relationships between Community and School"; Siddle Walker,

historical, educational research has rarely captured Black children's vantage and perspective related to their childhoods in and around pre-Brown schools .[13] Historian, Vanessa Siddle Walker whose seminal study examines Caswell Rosenwald School in North Carolina, describes Black children as "non-players." [14] Siddle Walker maintains, "[s]tudents in the general memory assume the role of recipients… they are not significant players in the [RSP] story."[15] In other words, although there is longstanding evidence that Black children's right to and purpose for education has been debated and that Black children have endured inequitable schooling conditions, we have little knowledge about their childhood experiences in and around schools and how they used their agency to impact their schools, teachers, curriculum, activities, or peers.

Design of Study

Given these gaps, I set out with this study to bring Black children's presence and agency to the fore in historical, educational research. The following questions guided this dissertation:

(1) What do the oral histories and material objects of Black children who attended Pickens County Rosenwald Schools (1940 - 1969) tell us about the experience of Black childhood in and around these settings?

"African American Teaching in the South"; Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*, 1996.

[13] Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*, 2006; Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*, 1996.

[14] Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*, 1996, 212.

[15] Siddle Walker, 212.

(2) What do Black children's childhood experiences in these settings reveal about how they may (or may not) have influenced the culture, organization, or dynamics of pre-Brown segregated schools?

(3) In foregrounding the perspectives and products of Black children, how might we develop distinct or nuanced understandings of the experiences and agency of Black children in and around (i.e., home and community) Pickens County Rosenwald Schools; and by implication, expand our understanding of Black *childhood* in this space and time?

Said another way, my dissertation aims to extend information regarding pre-Brown segregated schools by examining the vantage and perspective of children who attended Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County, Alabama (1940-1969).

To examine these questions, I drew upon the logic and assumptions of ethnohistory to help me look underneath the surface of adulthood to find, explore, examine, and understand what the children of PCRS said, thought, felt, and did as children in school and in relation to school. Data collection and analysis were guided by braiding together the perspectives of critical childhood studies theorists and documentation of how Black children have been positioned historically and contemporaneously. A critical childhood studies framework (CCS) calls for explorations of children's actions, contributions, social relationships, and cultures, and for seeing these as worthy of study in their own right, not only in relation to adult concerns.[16] Focusing on children's agency, CCS "gives importance to what children say, think, and feel, and who they

[16] Michael J. Dumas and Joseph Derrick Nelson, "(Re) Imagining Black Boyhood: Toward a Critical Framework for Educational Research," *Harvard Educational Review* 86, no. 1 (2016): 27–47; Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, *Translating Childhoods: Immigrant Youth, Language, and Culture*, The Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

are, as full participants in social processes, not just what they are becoming."[17] Scholars repeatedly remind us that Black children have rarely been imagined as children who possess characteristics associated with childhood such as innocence and naïveté in historical research and, more specifically, educational research.[18] As such, I approached this study as a critical historian who aimed to "[l]ook beneath the surface" of participants current adult status to access their childhood voice and experience."[19] I drew upon the logic and assumptions of ethnohistory methods to help me look underneath adulthood's surface to find, explore, examine, and understand what the *children* of PCRS said, thought, felt, and did as children in school. Ethnohistory is "a form of cultural biography that draws upon many kinds of testimony…" including oral history, material culture, and archival data.[20] This investigation draws on oral histories, material objects, archival and ethnographic data from four of six Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County, Alabama, circa 1915 -1973. The period of study is 1940 -1969.

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[17] Orellana, *Translating Childhoods*, 2009, 16.

[18] Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights* (NYU Press, 2011); Dumas and Nelson, "(Re) Imagining Black Boyhood"; Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia Blake, and Thalia González, "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood," 2017; Ann Arnett Ferguson, *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity* (University of Michigan Press, 2001); Phillip Atiba Goff et al., "Not yet Human: Implicit Knowledge, Historical Dehumanization, and Contemporary Consequences.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 94, no. 2 (2008): 292; Phillip Atiba Goff et al., "The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 106, no. 4 (2014): 526.

[19] D. P. Alridge, "The Dilemmas, Challenges, and Duality of an African-American Educational Historian," *Educational Researcher* 32, no. 9 (December 1, 2003): 31, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032009025.

[20] William S. Simmons, "Culture Theory in Contemporary Ethnohistory," *Ethnohistory* 35, no. 1 (1988): 10, https://doi.org/10.2307/482430.

I collected data in Pickens County, Alabama, which spread mostly over three summers: 2015, 2016, and 2018. During this time, I conducted interviews with and collected material objects from Rosenwald School alumni, who I refer to throughout the dissertation as "once-children" or "then-children." I use this terminology (i.e., once-children or then-children) to track participants' voices as they remember the past (i.e., once-children) and as expressed in real-time in the past (i.e., then-children). The voices of *"once-children"* capture the perspectives of the adults who are former students of Rosenwald Schools and who can recount (via *memory* in oral history interviews) their childhood experiences of Rosenwald Schools. The voices of "then-children" capture Rosenwald students' perspectives (via material objects owned or created during childhood) when they were enrolled in Rosenwald schools to provide an *in-time* accounting of their childhood experiences therein. Furthermore, I collected archival data to examine the historical context of the Rosenwald Schools program in Alabama and, more specifically, Pickens County, focusing on the perspectives and experiences of Black children.

Figure 1 Field video of remnants of Mamiesville Rosenwald School.

Although I do not deeply discuss the time I spent in the field as a point of empirical analysis, my time in the field has contributed to my observations, understanding of the past in this space, and my empirical approach. Rather than collect data via phone interviews or in predetermined and restricted set blocks of time, I took time to spend extended periods in Pickens County (i.e., three summers). Extended periods living in Pickens (and interviewing participants

during these times) allowed me to immerse myself in the past as best as I could. While things have certainly changed in Pickens since the time of the study, hints of the past are still present. I had many off-the-cuff conversations with community members about the Rosenwald Schools and local history, which revealed gatekeepers, informal gatekeepers, and critical informants throughout data collection.[21] I gained more context as I was driven to spaces where schools once stood (e.g., where Mamiesville schoolhouse wood had been repurposed into an old house, See Figure 1), and toured childhood homes (See Figure 2).

In addition to chasing the past, I hung out in the present. I attended revivals in an old one-room church where the choir marched in from the road up to the pulpit singing old spirituals that I had not heard on any radio anywhere. I ate the most delicious meals with my family, attended Thursday night bingo at the Lowndes Mississippi American Legion Hall with my 91-year-old Aunt. While en route, she would tell me stories of her education in a one-room schoolhouse and life in the community during her young days.

Over the summers, I visited homes, sought out information given to me by one person or another in happenstance encounters at a local coffee shop or library. My ears broadened as I began to learn the local dialect allowing me to stop asking for clarification (i.e., "Huh? I'm sorry, could you say that again?") over and over. Soon I would understand things the first time. As I traveled from town to town (i.e., Pickensville, to Ethelsvile, to Reform, to Aliceville, to Northport, to Tuscaloosa, to Columbus, Mississippi), I drove between school sites, experienced being engulfed in the tall trees, the darkness, the armadillos, the rattlesnakes, sparsely situated homes – both inhabited and long-abandoned – the massive log trucks, and one peacock strutting up the side of the highway. Each experience left me with context – sensations and encounters

[21] Hesse-Biber and Leavy, The Practice of Qualitative Research, 2010.

that are difficult to describe but added to my ability to more deeply search for gaps in the history as my field experiences helped me feel, experience, and observe the community. These experiences would later contribute to my ability to pluck nuance from quotidian experiences

Figure 2 Childhood home of Jackie Spencer, once-childhood of Pickens County Training School. The house, which is now empty, sits directly across the road from where PCTS once stood.

revealed in the data analysis process.

Through this process of living in and connecting with the community, I learned of the sole remaining Rosenwald schoolhouse in Pickens County, Alabama (Pickensville School) and joined the efforts of a group of study participants seeking to restore the schoolhouse. During this process, I suggested we collaborate to extend the schoolhouse's vision (which was to establish a community center) to include a museum using the data from my research. Through a generous grant from the Rackham Public Scholarship Program, we launched the museum and restored some of the history of Rosenwald Schools and Black childhood in community memory and public discourse.

In all, I conducted forty-nine oral history interviews with once-children, collected 1,836 archival documents from institutional archives and 640 material objects representing then-children from participants' personal collections. In examining the voices of the then-children and once-children of Rosenwald Schools via these three data sources, I gained insight into segregated schools during Jim Crow. By implication, what more might we generally understand about Black childhood during this time if we deliberately foreground the perspectives of Black children.

Overview of Dissertation

Overall, this study's findings revealed that Black children imagined school more expansively than the normative focus on academic achievement and order, designed to prepare them for future adulthood. Black children envisioned school as a space where they could be free to perform childhood. Consequently, Black children indulged their agencies in playing, being childish, and grappling with youthful conflicts and dramas across all landscapes they associated with school (i.e., the walk to school, the playground, the schoolhouse, and school hours). As Black children took up their liberties to relish in *their* social world, they reimagined poor conditions (e.g., rugged roads on the walk to school and playgrounds with no equipment) in ways that fulfilled their natural developmental passions to play and be playful. In doing so, they animated and expanded the dynamics and culture of school to include their fun and their opportunities to test their social learning (e.g., conflicts, dramas). Amid Black children's propensities to play and launch shenanigans in and around schools as an expression of their agency, their innocence and vulnerability became apparent. With *their* innocence and vulnerability in full view as they faced weathered conditions, barren playgrounds, or quandaries navigating their social world, we also see how adults came to their rescue – providing vital every

day supports and protections that underwrote Black children's execution of their childhood status.

This dissertation is organized in the following manner. This introductory chapter has concisely provided an overview of the rationale and design of the study**. Chapter II** provides a comprehensive review of literature concerning the presence of Black children and Black childhood in Black education historical literature. I first examine foundations literature, which captured theoretical debates related to whether and for what purpose Black children should have been educated, to understand how the literature has documented Black children's presence in Black education history. I then examine what I refer to as conditions literature to evidence where Black children *have been* empirically present and to understand how the presence or voice of Black children has been documented in the History of Black education. Finally, I examined historical education research that has conducted extensive research on the RSP to explore how studies that relied heavily on the voices of once-children who attended Rosenwald Schools documented these former children's voices and perspectives in these particular schools. **Chapter III** provides a detailed discussion of the overall study design, including methodology, researcher positionality, site of study, data collection, and data analysis. **Chapter IV** offers a window into the burdens once-children experienced just getting to school. Whether children walked or were bused to school, findings reveal the journey was laborious. Once-children illustrated the journey to school was a routine labor riddled with constraints brought on by long distances, rugged terrain, and inclement weather. While facing these constraints, children also experienced portals – openings forward through various supports and protections launched by family, peers, and their own agency. **Chapter V** illustrates Black children's everyday agencies while they journeyed on the road to school and up to the playground. Findings show the journey to school opening up a new road for the children – a space to begin to taste and indulge in the everyday liberties of being a child in a social world

envisioned specifically by and for children. As they enter spaces within the school ecosystem (i.e., neighbors' homes, playgrounds, farmland), findings show children indulged their agency in being kids. Along their way, Black children experienced a sense of comradery and belonging. They took liberties to act on their desires to be playful -- engaging one another and the world via frisky behavior and imaginative play. **Chapter VI** takes us into the schoolhouse door and explores Black children's efforts and experiences playing and launching shenanigans right in the schoolhouse**. Chapter VII** discusses the significance of Black children's expressions – their innocence and agency – in school and spaces associated with school.

Concluding Remarks

This dissertation provides a well-timed exploration of Black children's experiences and voices in and around the Rosenwald Schools, which were de jure segregated schools operating throughout the American South during the Jim Crow Era. It provides the field with empirical historical insight into Black children's quotidian schooling experiences and actions as remembered and told by them. Their insights offer insight into how Black children had envisioned and experienced schooling in the past – during a time when America sought to disenfranchise Black children in education and society more broadly. Ultimately, this dissertation shows we *can* see Black children, and we can learn from Black children. By *seeing* Black children, we as educators and scholars can begin to *see* and support Black children's daily efforts to be children. We can *respect* their natural and developmentally appropriate desires to do so when we "look beneath the surface" to connect with their humanity embedded in their everyday doings. By *learning* from Black children, we as educators can consider how we have not imagined schools (and spaces associated with schools) expansively enough for Black

children. While we have solidly and necessarily focused on academically preparing them for their futures, how have we ignored their current possibilities right now, in the present?

Chapter II | Review of Literature

Background of Black Childhood and Childhood Status in Education

Scholars repeatedly remind us that Black children are rarely imagined as children.[22] This stems from having conceived of childhood and Blackness in mutually exclusive ways. On the one hand, childhood captures an innocence that warrants protection. On the other, "being" Black places Black children decidedly outside the construct of innocence because innocence has been raced white.[23] Historian, Robin Bernstein[24] maintained that the collapsing of childhood and innocence, and its embodiment in whiteness, emerged in the mid-19th century. Bernstein argued:

> Childhood was then understood not as innocent but as innocence itself: not a symbol of innocence but as its embodiment. This innocence was raced white. To

[22] Robin Bernstein, Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights (NYU Press, 2011); Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia Blake, and Thalia González, "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood," 2017; Phillip Atiba Goff et al., "The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children.," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 106, no. 4 (2014): 526; Ann Arnett Ferguson, Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity (University of Michigan Press, 2001); Michael J. Dumas and Joseph Derrick Nelson, "(Re) Imagining Black Boyhood: Toward a Critical Framework for Educational Research," Harvard Educational Review 86, no. 1 (2016): 27–47.

[23] Bernstein, Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights; Dumas and Nelson, "(Re) Imagining Black Boyhood"; Epstein, Blake, and González, "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood"; Ferguson, Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity; Goff et al., "The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children."

[24] Bernstein, Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights.

> be innocent was to be innocent of something, to achieve obliviousness. This obliviousness was not merely the absence of knowledge, but an active state of repelling knowledge … to perform childhood innocence … to manifest a state of holy ignorance ... a performed transcendence of social categories of class, gender, and most importantly, race.[25]

If innocence is raced white, and childhood embodies innocence, then those who are not white (in this case, Black children) cannot personify innocence and are thereby systematically denied childhood status. Denied access to childhood status, Black children have not been afforded the supports and protections normally associated with childhood in terms of public safety and within institutions.[26] The denial support of these supports and protections have been evidenced historically and contemporaneously and confirm the extent to which Black childhood is a silenced or marginalized social status. Below, I provide brief examples of how Black children have been denied supports and protections otherwise delineated for children across slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow eras.

During U.S. slavery (1776-1865), Black children were reduced to chattel, were required to labor as if they were adults, subject to the same terrors and punishments that marked the experiences of adult slaves.[27] During Reconstruction (1865-1877), research has shown that after

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[25] Bernstein, 4.

[26] Epstein, Blake, and Gonzalez, "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood"; Phillip Atiba Goff et al., "Not yet Human: Implicit Knowledge, Historical Dehumanization, and Contemporary Consequences.," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 94, no. 2 (2008): 292; Goff et al., "The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children."

[27] Wilma King, African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights (Springer, 2005); Wilma King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America (Indiana University Press, 2011).

slavery was abolished and Blacks openly sought to advance, white southerners responded to Black children's efforts to become educated with the same venom and force held for Black adults. Historian Ronald E. Butchart described this force as "[o]verwhelming … violence ranging from simple intimidation through incendiarism, physical violence, shootings and murder against students and teachers."[28] The positioning of Black children as adults also carried into the Jim Crow era (circa1877-1968). Then laws and societal norms that protected (white) children were not applied to Black children.[29] Accordingly, in everyday public society, Black children were assaulted, bullied, murdered, and lynched without consequence. During this time, Black children were also restricted from playing in ways that mark childhood. They were excluded from public places commonly designated for childhood play and recreation.[30] They were shut out from public playgrounds, clubhouses, movie theaters, amusement parks, and local pools.[31] In instances where Black children received these recreational opportunities, these spaces were separate from and inferior to the play spaces designated for white children and often lacked the resources and equipment that facilitated childhood fun, e.g., "…baseball diamonds, tennis courts,

[28] Ronald E. Butchart, "Black Hope, White Power: Emancipation, Reconstruction and the Legacy of Unequal Schooling in the U.S. South, 1861–1880," Paedagogica Historica 46, no. 1–2 (February 1, 2010): 33, https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230903528447.

[29] Allison Davis and John Dollard, Children of Bondage: The Personality Development of Negro Youth in the Urban South, n.d.; E. F. Frazier, Negro Youth at the Crossways, Negro Youth at the Crossways (American Council on Education, 1940); Charles S. Johnson, Growing up in the Black Belt., 1941; King, African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights.

[30] Davis and Dollard, Children of Bondage: The Personality Development of Negro Youth in the Urban South; Frazier, Negro Youth at the Crossways; Johnson, Growing up in the Black Belt.; King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America.

[31] Frazier, Negro Youth at the Crossways; Johnson, Growing up in the Black Belt.

swimming pools, [etc.]."[32] However, America's schools are perhaps the most egregious space that historically excluded Black children.

History of Black Childhood in Education

The expectation, ability, and opportunity to attend school rather than work also marks childhood. However, Black children were still systemically denied the opportunity to wholly function as children across generations spanning slavery, Reconstruction, and the Jim Crow era. I provide brief examples again.

During slavery, most Black children were forbidden from being educated and could face significant consequences if they attempted to learn.[33] In cases where Black children could be educated, "the extent to which they succeeded depended upon their owners' attitudes about the intellectual… development of slaves."[34] Of the few slave owners who allowed the enslaved to become learned, the slaveholder's goal was for the enslaved to be of greater service to the slaveholder, not for the enslaved to use literacy to advance themselves. [35] During Reconstruction, research has shown Black children (and their parents) raced to become educated, and significant advances in literacy were made (Anderson, 1988a; Butchart, 2010b; Span & Anderson, 2005), [36]

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[32] Frazier, Negro Youth at the Crossways, 216.

[33] Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (Modern Library Classics (Paper, 2000); King, African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights; King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America; T Booker, "Washington, Up From Slavery," Three Negro Classics, 1901, 1856–1901.

[34] King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America, 169.

[35] King, African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights; King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America.

[36] James D Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935 (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1988); Ronald E Butchart, Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876 (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2010); Christopher M

However, in many cases, their efforts to become educated were met with whites' resistance (i.e., southerners, Northern philanthropists, reformers, etc.), who systematically sought to control or suppress Black education.[37] During Jim Crow, under segregation law, Black children were afforded segregated schooling, which was to be separate from but equal to the education provided to White children. [38]But studies indicate Black children's schools received less funding and resources than schools for White children. [39] Thus when not officially excluded from school, Black children were deemed undeserving of the educational resources that marked the childhoods of white children attending school. Moreover, the economic oppression to which Blacks were subject often required Black children to work to contribute to their families'

Span and James D Anderson, "The Quest for 'Book Learning': African American Education in Slavery and Freedom," A Companion to African American History, 2005, 295.

[37] Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935; Butchart, "Black Hope, White Power"; Span and Anderson, "The Quest for 'Book Learning': African American Education in Slavery and Freedom."

[38] Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935; Kenneth Bancroft Clark and Woody Klein, Toward Humanity and Justice: The Writings of Kenneth B. Clark, Scholar of the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Decision (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004); Richard Kluger, Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality (Vintage, 2011); Vanessa Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South: 1940-1960," American Educational Research Journal 38, no. 4 (2001): 751.

[39] Ambrose Caliver, "Availability of Education to Negroes in Rural Communities. Bulletin, 1935, No. 12.," Office of Education, United States Department of the Interior, 1936; WE Burghardt Du Bois, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?," Journal of Negro Education, 1935, 328–35; Michael Fultz, "African-American Teachers in the South, 1890–1940: Growth, Feminization, and Salary Discrimination.," Teachers College Record, 1995; Robert A. Margo, Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950: An Economic History (University of Chicago Press, 1990); Kara Miles Turner, "' Getting It Straight': Southern Black School Patrons and the Struggle for Equal Education in the Pre-and Post-Civil Rights Eras," Journal of Negro Education, 2003, 217–29.

financial wellbeing and compromised, in turn, their ability to attend school throughout the school year or for many years. [40]

Through the denial or suppression of education at many levels in society and across generations (i.e., slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow), research has shown Black children exclusion from the opportunities and privileges that marked (white) childhood status. They thus could not expect to pursue education as was the right of white children. Moreover, Black children would come to understand that their attempts or ability to become educated would be thwarted by whites' ruthless and violent acts (i.e., stagnating laws, physical violence, murder, arson, etc.). These acts would have otherwise been considered monstrous if acted upon by white children. Denied the childhood status afforded to whites, Black children's exclusion from school was not only rationalized, but they were denied the chance to explore their talents and pursue their dreams. [41]

In this section, I have discussed how Black children were denied protections and supports that would otherwise mark their childhood status historically, across time. I have linked this discussion to how the denial of childhood status has also been evident in education. I have shown the systemic and normative denial of education to Black children because of their racial status. Essentially, because they are Black children, they have not been considered children. Because they have not been considered children, they have not been afforded the same public supports and protections that have been an otherwise natural consideration for children. In the next

[40] Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935; Clark and Klein, Toward Humanity and Justice: The Writings of Kenneth B. Clark, Scholar of the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Decision; E Franklin Frazier, "Negro Youth at the Crossways.," 1940; Johnson, Growing up in the Black Belt.

[41] Booker, "Washington, Up From Slavery"; Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, 2000; Du Bois, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?"

section, I will link this discussion to contemporary scholarship that maintains the continued connections between Black children's marginalization from childhood status and education.

Contemporary Research on Black Childhood in Education

The aforementioned discussion documents some of how Black children were historically denied the protections and supports reserved for (white) children precisely because white children were always and already imagined as innocent and in need of support and protection. Contemporary research continues to confirm the extent to which Black children remain excluded from supports and protections that are the province of those deemed innocent in schools. Cox [42] and Epstein et. al. [43] have indicated that, in the case of Black girls, they are viewed in society and in school as "need[ing] less nurturing, protection, and support compared to white girls."[44] In the case of Black boys, Goff et. al. [45] reveals in school Black boys are "seen as less innocent, …perceived as older, [and experience] greater dehumanization."[46] Similarly, Ann Arnett Ferguson[47] documents the extent to which Black boys are adultified in school, meaning Black boys' "[t]ransgressions are made to take on a sinister, intentional, fully conscious tone, that is

[42] Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship (Duke University Press, 2015).

[43] "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood," 2017.

[44] Epstein, Blake, and González, "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood," 1.

[45] "The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children."

[46] Goff et al., "The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children.," 536.

[47] Ferguson, *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*.

stripped of any element of childish naïveté."[48] In response, their transgressions are met with discipline and punishment rather than with the edification and support provided to white boys for the same offenses. Both in historical and contemporary research, in schools and the public sphere, Black children's otherwise appropriate expressions of childhood have been and continue to be rendered inappropriate, malicious, suspect, and ultimately adult-like**.** [49] This sustained devaluation of Black children has become a default perspective of them in the American imagination. Below, I discuss how the sustained inability to envision Black children as possessors of childhood has rendered them unimaginable – invisible in society and invisible in historical, educational research.

Dumas & Nelson (2016) argue, Black childhood has been "[s]ocially unimagined and unimaginable, largely due to the devalued position and limited consideration of Black girls and boys within the broader social conception of childhood "(p. 27). The inability to socially imagine Black children has led to a vacuum of historical research on Black childhood. We have not collected their stories as told by them. King (2005) asserts, "[a] void remains in the general literature about African American children in a historical perspective" (p. 4). Historical research captures Black children as slaves (King 2005; 2011), as racially and economically oppressed

[48] Ferguson, 83.

[49] Aimee Meredith Cox, Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship (Duke University Press, 2015); Allison Davis and John Dollard, "Children of Bondage: The Personality Development of Negro Youth in the Urban South.," 1940; Epstein, Blake, and Gonzalez, "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood"; Ferguson, Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity; Frazier, Negro Youth at the Crossways; Goff et al., "Not yet Human: Implicit Knowledge, Historical Dehumanization, and Contemporary Consequences."; Johnson, Growing up in the Black Belt.; Russell J Skiba et al., "The Color of Discipline: Sources of Racial and Gender Disproportionality in School Punishment," The Urban Review 34, no. 4 (2002): 317–42; Brenda L Townsend, "The Disproportionate Discipline of African American Learners: Reducing School Suspensions and Expulsions," Exceptional Children 66, no. 3 (2000): 381–91.

(Davis & Dollard, 1940; Frazier, 1940; Johnson, 1941), as civil rights activists (Hale, 2016; Levine, 2000), as students (Betty J Reed, 2004; Vanessa Siddle Walker, 1996) – but not as children who embody and perform childhood. In other words, there is a dearth of historical records describing Black youth. King[50] reveals Black children have not had an opportunity to document their lives in the public record:

> "[A]ttempting to recapture the voices [of Black children] from the nineteenth and early twentieth century is a daunting task, especially when one recognizes that Black children generally had little opportunity to record events in their lives and even more rarely did such accounts come to be published."[51]

Because Black children are not imagined as children, their stories of youthfulness have been scantly collected. Black children were denied protections and supports of childhood throughout slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow times and, therefore, denied a voice to narrate their personal histories and lived experiences as children through these periods in history.

Our ability to imagine Black childhood in and across historical time is not only compromised by the inclination to place Black children outside of categories (like innocence) that mark and protect their childhood status, but it is also compromised by our failure to deliberately foreground the voices and perspectives of Black children operating in different historical moments. One enduring and critical historical moment has been education.

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[50] Wilma King, *African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights* (Springer, 2005).

[51] King, 5.

Before discussing the prospective benefits of documenting Black childhood during particular historical moments in education from Black children's vantage, I outline what we currently know about the presence and experience of Black children as presented in historical research. This helps us understand how Black children's voices or experiences *have* or have not been documented in historical research. Given my interest in the documentation of Black children and their childhoods in education, a review of education's history establishes Black children's presence in the literature and a rationale for my pursued research questions. Hence, I outline Black children's presence in (a) debates related to the warrant for and function of education for Blacks (i.e., Foundations Literature), and (b) debates pertaining to the conditions and value of education and schools for Blacks (i.e., Conditions Literature). As previously mentioned, I document the presence and positioning of Black children within these debates to determine what, if anything, we learn from Black children about their existence and positioning in these historical investigations of discussions related to Black education pre-Brown vs. Board of Education. I then conclude my review of literature with a more in-depth examination of discussions specifically related to the conditions and value of Rosenwald Schools (i.e., Rosenwald Literature), which were established pre-Brown and are the focus of my dissertation study.

Foundations Literature: Presence (or absence) of Black Childhood

Historical examinations of Black education during slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow eras (previously referred to as foundations of Black education literature) have captured whites' and Blacks' competing interpretations of the warrant for and function of Black

education.[52] But, within these interpretations, Black children have not been empirically present. Instead, Black children have been implicitly present through racially opposing perspectives on whether and for what purpose Blacks should be educated. While whites (i.e., slaveholders, planters, southerners, and Northern philanthropists, reformers, evangelicals, educators etc.) generally thought Black children should not be educated or should receive minimal education.[53] Blacks (i.e., enslaved peoples, freedmen and freedwomen, leaders, educators, Black community etc.) thought Black children should be educated and that their education should be liberatory. [54]

[52] Systematic Search for Literature: To understand Black children's voices and experiences under pre-Brown segregation education as evidenced in Black schools, I conducted a systematic search for historical and social science literature related to pre-Brown school segregation. Databases I searched included Google Scholar, ProQuest, Hathi Trust, and the University of Michigan Library. Keywords searched included pre-Brown segregation; pre-Brown school segregation; African American Schools; Black education; colored education; negro education; negro children education; colored school segregation; rural, segregated Black schools; rural, segregated colored schools; rural, segregated negro schools; training schools; negro education and other variations of the aforementioned terms. General search terms like "pre-Brown segregation" yielded over 14,000 references across the search engines. I limited my search to segregated schools in the South, which narrowed to forty references. References included 14 books, twenty-five articles, and one speech.

[53] Daniel Aaronson, Lisa Barrow, and William Sander, "Teachers and Student Achievement in the Chicago Public High Schools," Journal of Labor Economics 25, no. 1 (2007): 95–135; Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935; Henry Allen Bullock, History of Negro Education in the South (JSTOR, 1967); Ronald E Butchart, Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875 (Praeger Pub Text, 1980); King, African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights; King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America.

[54] Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935; Mary McLeod Bethune, "How Fare Negro Youth" (Alliance for Guidance of Rural Youth (U.S.), 1937), Alliance for Guidance of Rural Youth (U.S.), Special Collections at Duke University Library, http://search.library.duke.edu/images/icon-Internet%20resource.gif] Internet resource; [http://search.library.duke.edu/images/icon-Manuscript.gif; Butchart, Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876; King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America; Span and Anderson, "The Quest for 'Book Learning': African American Education in Slavery and Freedom"; Heather Andrea Williams, Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2009).

Through these conceptualizations of Black education, an imagined Black child comes into view, and therein lies the presence of Black children in this body of literature. The imagined Black child (by whites account) was (un)agentic, constrainedly agentic, or dangerously-agentic. The imagined Black child (by Blacks' accounts) was an agentic hope. In the following section, I describe these various forms of agency (or non-agency) as evidenced in the foundations of Black education literature.

(Un)agentic. In foundations literature, scholars' examinations of whites' ideas about the warrant for and function of Black education has shown that southern whites (slaveholders, planters, evangelicals, leaders, etc.) generally thought Blacks should not be educated. On the one hand, Southern whites overwhelmingly argued Black children were *incapable* of being educated [55]and substantiated their position through claims that Black children were intellectually deficient and void of imagination[56] and that knowledge was "beyond [Black children's] mental capacities."[57] In addition, whites sought to substantiate their claims that Black children could not be educated through assertions that Black children did not have the temperament to be educated.

[55] Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935; Bullock, History of Negro Education in the South; Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, 2000; King, African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights; King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America; Williams, Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom.

[56] Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (Indiana University Press, 2011).

[57] King, 180.

Whites claimed Black children were "incompetent to participate in civil activities,"[58] and were not worthy of emotional care by teachers.[59]

In having defined education outside of the empirical presence of Black children, whites constructed an imagined Black child with *no* agency. The imagined Black child (as per whites) was intellectually unable to be educated; void of an imagination which was a skill essential to learning; unable to retain knowledge which would have also been critical to learning; were not civil, which would imply Black children were unable to be a citizen of a classroom environment; and not worthy of care – which would distance Black children from attracting the concern of their teachers. Essentially, whites' ideas about whether Black children should be educated have revealed an imagined Black child who was uneducable – unable to act – to learn, imagine, be civil, attract care, and thereby (un)agentic.

Constrainedly-agentic. While it was uncommon for southern white slaveholders to argue that Blacks should be educated, some white slaveholders educated the enslaved children. [60] These slaveholders thought educating enslaved children was useful for the slaveholder's business productivity. [61]For example, one slave owner, a physician, needed his young slave to be of help, "[T]o read and write so he could copy the names and addresses of patients."[62] Other slaveholders

[58] King, 70.

[59] Henry Allen Bullock, *History of Negro Education in the South* (JSTOR, 1967).

[60] Bullock, History of Negro Education in the South; King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America.

[61] King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America; Ellis O. Knox, "The Origin and Development of the Negro Separate School," The Journal of Negro Education 16, no. 3 (1947): 269, https://doi.org/10.2307/2966333.

[62] King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*, 182.

thought enslaved children should be educated for varied reasons, such as to perform language in "tolerable" ways. [63] As a former slave, "Thomas Pittus believed his owner taught him to read so he might "[b]e halfway able to use tolerably good language around his [the slave owners] grandchildren."[64]

This subset of white slaveholders only sought to educate Black children for instrumental or palatable purposes that benefited slave owners. Slaveholders' ideas about the function of education for Black children revealed an imagined Black child who, as property, was incapable of learning except for serving slaveholders' wills and aesthetics. As property, the imagined Black child's mind was not useful for his/her own sake but rather *constrainedly agentic* – as his/her mind could only be useful for the slaveholders' purposes and made more efficient to that end.

Dangerously-agentic. In this body of literature, scholars' examinations of whites' positions related to Black education foundations have revealed that they either thought Black children should not be educated or that education should control the academic, economic, and social advancement of Black children. [65] Whites (i.e., planters and southerners more generally) who thought Black children *should* remain uneducated feared that Black children would use education "as a vehicle for protest or an avenue to freedom."[66] Furthermore, whites thought that

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[63] King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America, 182.

[64] King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*, 182.

[65] James D Anderson, "Northern Foundations and the Shaping of Southern Black Rural Education, 1902-1935," History of Education Quarterly 18, no. 4 (1978): 371–96; Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935; James D. Anderson, "Black Rural Communities and the Struggle for Education during the Age of Booker T. Washington, 1877–1915," Peabody Journal of Education 67, no. 4 (1990): 46–62; Horace Mann Bond, Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel (University of Alabama Press, 1994); Bullock, History of Negro Education in the South.

[66] King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*, 186.

"a literate culture among Blacks" contradicted Blacks lowered social status in the South and, by implication, would challenge whites' hierarchy of racial stratification (Anderson, 1988, p. 17-18).[67] Scholars have also shown some whites (i.e., southerners, Northern philanthropists, evangelicals, educators, reformers, etc.) thought Black children *should* be educated. These whites thought the purpose of educating Black children should be to control (as per whites) Black children's violence and aggression [68]; prepare Black children to join the labor class [69]; teach Black children morality;[70] to accept their lowered societal position [71]; and to "contain the potential of Black voting power." [72]

In both cases, whether whites were for or against educating Black children, whites' views have revealed an imagined Black child as *dangerously agentic* – and educable deviant or threat. The imagined Black child was inherently violent, aggressive, and immoral and thereby needed an education that would have contained and controlled these proclivities. Alternatively, this

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[67] James D Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1988), 17–18.

[68] Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (Modern Library Classics (Paper, 2000); Samuel Leonard Smith, Builders of Goodwill: The Story of the State Agents of Negro Education in the South, 1910 to 1950 (Tennessee Book Company, 1950).

[69] Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935; Bullock, History of Negro Education in the South; Knox, "The Origin and Development of the Negro Separate School"; Karen L. Riley, "'A Toilet in the Middle of the Court House Square': The Summer Teaching Institute of 1915 and the Influence of Booker T. Washington on Negro Teacher Education in Alabama," Education and Culture 18, no. 1 (2002): 2–9; Smith, Builders of Goodwill: The Story of the State Agents of Negro Education in the South, 1910 to 1950.

[70] Ronald E Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (Praeger Pub Text, 1980).

[71] Knox, "The Origin and Development of the Negro Separate School," 269–70.

[72] Butchart, Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875, 33.

imagined Black child (if educated) would become resistant to their lowered social status, disrupt the social order, gain political power, and "[i]f unchecked [would] soon carry beyond [whites] control."[73] In other words, the imagined Black child who emerged from whites' discussions related to the foundations of Black education was a child whose education and schooling had the potential to ignite his/her agency. However, this Black child's agency (as imagined by whites) was dangerous. While whites saw Black children's agency as problematic and threatening, Blacks imagined their children's agency as fertile grounds for getting into "good trouble."[74] In other words, Black children's agentic promise was the hope for the future of the race.

Agentic-hope. Blacks imagined Black children's agency to positively impact their race's future which stood in direct contrast to whites' conceptualization of an imagined Black child as *(un)agentic, constrainedly agentic*, or *dangerously agentic*. Expressly, Black children's presence in historical literature has shown that Blacks (i.e., enslaved Blacks, freedmen and freedwomen, Black leaders, activists, educators, and the Black community by and large) imagined the Black child as *the agentic-hope* of their race.[75] By agentic-hope, I mean Blacks believed Black children

[73] Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875*, 35.

[74] I use this term in John Lewis's spirit, who coined the term "good trouble" in speaking about the importance of his and his comrade's activism during the civil rights era. As young people, sons, and daughters of the oppressed, they used their agency to push back against racism and inequality. This is the kind of agency white architects of education feared and demonized.

[75] James D. Anderson, "Northern Foundations and the Shaping of Southern Black Rural Education, 1902-1935," *History of Education Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1978): 371, https://doi.org/10.2307/367710; Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*; James D. Anderson, "Black Rural Communities and the Struggle for Education during the Age of Booker T. Washington, 1877–1915," *Peabody Journal of Education* 67, no. 4 (1990): 46–62; Mary McLeod Bethune, "How Fare Negro Youth" (Alliance for Guidance of Rural Youth (U.S.), 1937), Alliance for Guidance of Rural Youth (U.S.), Special Collections at Duke University Library, http://search.library.duke.edu/images/icon-Internet%20resource.gif] Internet resource; [http://search.library.duke.edu/images/icon-Manuscript.gif; Ronald E Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Univ of

had the aptitude to become educated despite continued efforts to deny them education. Blacks hoped that despite the obstacles of racial oppression, Black children would indeed seize education as one expression of freedom, and in doing so forward their race.[76] Through scholars' examinations of Blacks' ideologies and efforts to establish Black education, this body of literature has exposed an imagined Black child who had the ability not only to become literate but who also was the physical embodiment of faith that Black children's knowledge could be used to break bondage, identify and challenge disenfranchisement, and demand and exercise citizenship.[77]

The aforementioned discussion documents some of the ways Black children were present, albeit theoretically, not empirically, in foundations literature. To be present empirically would

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North Carolina Press, 2010); Ronald E. Butchart, "Black Hope, White Power: Emancipation, Reconstruction and the Legacy of Unequal Schooling in the U.S. South, 1861–1880," *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 1–2 (February 1, 2010): 33–50, https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230903528447; William Edward Burghardt DuBois, "Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America," *New York: Russell and Russell*, 1935; King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*; Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2009).

[76] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*; Bethune, "How Fare Negro Youth"; Mary McLeod Bethune, "The Adaptation of the History of the Negro to the Capacity of the Child," *The Journal of Negro History* 24, no. 1 (January 1, 1939): 9–13, https://doi.org/10.2307/2714492; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876*; Butchart, "Black Hope, White Power"; DuBois, "Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America"; King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*; Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*.

[77] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*; Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876*; King, *African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights*; King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*.

entail documenting Black children's actual actions and experiences in and around schools. Instead, this literature documents historical discourses related to whether and how Black children should be educated. In the process, such discourses establish distinct and sometimes competing images of who Black children were and what they were capable of. But none of these varied (albeit implicit) constructions of Black children's agency made evident (and sometimes outrightly denied) Black children's childhood status or how they thought, felt, or acted as children. In other historical research related to the conditions of Black education and schools, Black children *are* empirically present with their presence documented during the Jim Crow era, but here, again, we are provided a very circumscribed picture regarding Black childhood via Black children's thinking, feeling, and action. Instead, this body of literature foregrounds the conditions under which Black children have been educated, not Black children's experiences and actions as voiced by them. In the following section, I discuss the empirical presence of Black children in the body of literature that focuses on the conditions of Black education and schools. [78] Following my discussion of what I call conditions literature, I turn to a focused review of literature related to Rosenwald Schools which is the focus of this study. Rosenwald schools warrant explicit attention because a considerable proportion of Blacks (⅓) who were educated in

[78] Leslie Brown and Anne Valk, Living with Jim Crow: African American Women and Memories of the Segregated South (Springer, 2010); Caliver, "Availability of Education to Negroes in Rural Communities. Bulletin, 1935, No. 12."; Linda T Coats, "The Way We Learned: African American Students' Memories of Schooling in the Segregated South," The Journal of Negro Education, 2010, 6–17; Fultz, "African-American Teachers in the South, 1890–1940: Growth, Feminization, and Salary Discrimination."; Margo, Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950; Adah L. Ward Randolph, "'It Is Better to Light a Candle Than to Curse the Darkness': Ethel Thompson Overby and Democratic Schooling in Richmond, Virginia, 1910–1958," Educational Studies 48, no. 3 (May 1, 2012): 220–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2012.660795; Randolph; Turner, "' Getting It Straight': Southern Black School Patrons and the Struggle for Equal Education in the Pre-and Post-Civil Rights Eras"; Vanessa Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South: 1940-1960."

the segregated South were educated in these institutions. Left behind were historical records upon which historians of education drew upon to document Black education during Jim Crow. Below, I discuss the ways Black children have been present in effort to examine the conditions of Black children's education and their accordant schooling experiences. I show that while scholars' examinations have exposed the inequities or value of Black education during the Jim Crow era, these examinations did not foreground the vantage and perspective of Black children related to *their* lived experiences as children. Hence, we have no window into Black children's personal backgrounds, childish actions, thoughts, or youthful experiences and thereby no window into Black childhood in and around pre-Brown schools.

Conditions Literature: Presence (or absence) of Black Childhood

In the conditions literature, one strand of scholarship has invoked mostly quantitative and historical archival methods to illuminate Black education inequities. In these examinations, the presence of Black children has been most apparent through the tracking of children's schooling conditions. Scholars have found Black children's schooling conditions included poor building

facilities,[79] increased enrollment but poor access and attendance,[80] inequitable school funding,[81] low teacher pay and few certified teachers,[82] poor or no access to school buses,[83] challenges with

[79] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*; Bullock, *History of Negro Education in the South*; Ambrose Caliver, "Availability of Education to Negroes in Rural Communities. Bulletin, 1935, No. 12.," *Office of Education, United States Department of the Interior*, 1936; Louis R Harlan, *Separate and Unequal: Public School Campaigns and Racism in the Southern Seaboard States, 1901-1915* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2011); Michael Fultz, "African American Teachers in the South, 1890-1940: Powerlessness and the Ironies of Expectations and Protest," *History of Education Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (1995): 401–22; Vanessa Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South: 1940-1960," *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 4 (2001): 751–79; Samuel Leonard Smith, *Builders of Goodwill: The Story of the State Agents of Negro Education in the South, 1910 to 1950* (Tennessee Book Company, 1950); Kara Miles Turner, "' Getting It Straight': Southern Black School Patrons and the Struggle for Equal Education in the Pre-and Post-Civil Rights Eras," *Journal of Negro Education*, 2003, 217–29.

[80] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*; Anderson, "Black Rural Communities and the Struggle for Education during the Age of Booker T. Washington, 1877–1915"; Bullock, *History of Negro Education in the South*; Caliver, "Availability of Education to Negroes in Rural Communities. Bulletin, 1935, No. 12."; Ambrose Caliver, "Certain Significant Developments in the Education of Negroes During the Past Generation," *The Journal of Negro History* 35, no. 2 (April 1, 1950): 111–34, https://doi.org/10.2307/2715856; Fultz, "African American Teachers in the South, 1890-1940: Powerlessness and the Ironies of Expectations and Protest"; Robert A. Margo, *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950: An Economic History* (University of Chicago Press, 1990); Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South"; Smith, *Builders of Goodwill: The Story of the State Agents of Negro Education in the South, 1910 to 1950*.

[81] Anderson, "Northern Foundations and the Shaping of Southern Black Rural Education, 1902-1935"; Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*; Bullock, *History of Negro Education in the South*; Caliver, "Availability of Education to Negroes in Rural Communities. Bulletin, 1935, No. 12."; Ambrose Caliver, "Segregation in American Education: An Overview," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 304, no. 1 (March 1, 1956): 17–25, https://doi.org/10.1177/000271625630400105; Ambrose Caliver and others, "Fundamentals in the Education of Negroes. Bulletin, 1935, No. 6.," *Office of Education, United States Department of the Interior*, 1935, http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED542360; Charles Hamilton Houston, *A STUDY IN EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA [1-3]*, Film Reel/Black and White, vol. 1, 3 vols., Motion Picture Films on Community and Family Life, Education, Religious Beliefs, and the Art and Culture of Minority and Ethnic Groups, ca. 1930 - ca. 1953 (South Carolina, 1936).

[82] Anderson, "Black Rural Communities and the Struggle for Education during the Age of Booker T. Washington, 1877–1915"; Ambrose Caliver, "The Negroes," *Review of Educational Research*, 1944, 264–72; Fultz, "African American Teachers in the South, 1890-1940:

curriculum as having been irrelevant or including derogatory portrayals of Blacks,[84] and disparities in literacy and school completion. [85] While these examinations have provided a thorough picture of the inequities faced by Black schools and thereby the inequities endured by Black children during the Jim Crow era, Black children's stories – their actions, thoughts, backgrounds, experiences, as they rode dilapidated school buses, used culturally irrelevant school books, experienced inadequate facilities, or approached curriculum, for example, are not apparent.

Other literature, qualitative in its orientation, made the presence of Black children visible through examinations of the value of Black schools [86]. Relying on oral history or in-depth interviews with once-children, historical studies on segregated schools during pre-Brown, have

Powerlessness and the Ironies of Expectations and Protest"; Michael Fultz, "Teacher Training and African American Education in the South, 1900-1940," *Journal of Negro Education*, 1995, 196–210; Margo, *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950*.

[83] Hamilton Houston, *A STUDY IN EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA [1-3]*.

[84] Caliver, "Availability of Education to Negroes in Rural Communities. Bulletin, 1935, No. 12."; Caliver, "Segregation in American Education: An Overview"; Smith, *Builders of Goodwill: The Story of the State Agents of Negro Education in the South, 1910 to 1950*.

[85] Margo, *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950*.

[86] Brown and Valk, Living with Jim Crow: African American Women and Memories of the Segregated South; Coats, "The Way We Learned: African American Students' Memories of Schooling in the Segregated South"; Randolph, "'It Is Better to Light a Candle Than to Curse the Darkness'"; Turner, "' Getting It Straight': Southern Black School Patrons and the Struggle for Equal Education in the Pre-and Post-Civil Rights Eras"; Vanessa Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South: 1940-1960"; V. S. Walker, "Valued Segregated Schools for African American Children in the South, 1935-1969: A Review of Common Themes and Characteristics," Review of Educational Research 70, no. 3 (January 1, 2000): 253–85, https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070003253.

revised previous historical accounts that have reduced Black schools to its resource deficiencies that lock them into deficit narratives.

By examining interview data of once-children who attended pre-Brown segregated schools, this body of literature revealed the agency of Black teachers during a time when Black schools were faced with inequitable material resources and conditions (i.e., facilities, supplies, funding, etc.). In this body of literature, interview data from once-children has shown Black teachers, who were documented as exuding professionalism,[87] provided students with critical literacy, instilled resistance, and self-worth,[88] supported children in talking freely about coping in a raced society,[89] extended care to the children (i.e., high expectations, discipline, and support).[90] Research has shown teachers and administrators coordinated extracurricular and academic activities for the children.[91] Also, evidence has shown, Black teachers visited children's homes and extended themselves to the community.[92]

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[87] Linda T Coats, "The Way We Learned: African American Students' Memories of Schooling in the Segregated South," *The Journal of Negro Education*, 2010, 6–17; Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South."

[88] Adah L. Ward Randolph, "'It Is Better to Light a Candle Than to Curse the Darkness': Ethel Thompson Overby and Democratic Schooling in Richmond, Virginia, 1910–1958," *Educational Studies* 48, no. 3 (May 1, 2012): 220–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2012.660795.

[89] Turner, "'Getting It Straight': Southern Black School Patrons and the Struggle for Equal Education in the Pre-and Post-Civil Rights Eras."

[90] Coats, "The Way We Learned: African American Students' Memories of Schooling in the Segregated South"; Emilie Siddle Walker, "Caswell County Training School, 1933–1969: Relationships between Community and School," *Harvard Educational Review* 63, no. 2 (1993): 161–83; Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South."

[91] Leslie Brown and Anne Valk, *Living with Jim Crow: African American Women and Memories of the Segregated South* (Springer, 2010).

[92] Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South."

Black children's presence in this body of literature has borne witness to the value of pre-Brown Black schools by providing a window into the agency of Black teachers, administrators, and other adults. However, Black children's presence has not revealed the agency of Black children in and around Black schools from their voice and perspective. Still, within this body of literature related to the conditions and value of Black schools, the Rosenwald Schools, which is the focus of my dissertation study, warrants a closer look as this common finding was especially prominent in research on Rosenwald Schools and will be the subject of the next section in which I elaborate on this set of findings specifically related to the Rosenwald School literature.

Rosenwald Literature: Presence (or absence) Voice and Experience of Black Childhood

Historical research on the Rosenwald Schools foregrounds this particular school project widely spread throughout the South and educated an estimated 1 out of 3 Black children living in the South.[93] Historical research has shown Rosenwald Schools had similar organizational structures, cultures, and student experiences.[94] Furthermore, scholars who have studied the Rosenwald Schools have relied heavily on the in-depth interview and oral history data of once-children who had been students in the Rosenwald Schools. Through qualitative research, once-children of Rosenwald Schools have provided a unique opportunity to understand and examine Black education from the collective experiences of this group. Given the significance of the Rosenwald School project and the volume of once-children's voices used to examine the conditions of Rosenwald Schools, it is important to review this literature for the presence (or

[93] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*.

[94] Mary S Hoffschwelle, The Rosenwald Schools of the American South (University Press of Florida, 2006).

absence) of Black children within this body of literature. In the following sections, I first briefly discuss my search and selection process in preparation to review historical research on Rosenwald Schools. I then discuss the presence or absence of Black childhood in this body of research.

To understand more about the presence of Black children's voices and experiences under pre-Brown segregated education as evidenced in Rosenwald Schools, I conducted a systematic search for research on Rosenwald Schools. This search revealed eight book-length historical research studies, seven journal articles, one book chapter, and one dissertation focused on the histories of Rosenwald Schools. Across these studies, scholars conduct in-depth interviews with once-children, participants who are former students of Rosenwald Schools. The voices of these once-children evidenced the founding and growth of the schools, their organizational use, the material and extracurricular infrastructure, and some of the social and community dynamics that were connected to the operation of these schools. As I will elaborate upon below, in detailing these aspects of the Rosenwald school environment, the emphasis was on what adults had done *for* children; providing in the process only nominal, if any, insight into that which characterized the childhoods of those children being served by the adults or how the children themselves acted upon, within, and shaped these schools and their experiences within through childhood activities.

School Buildings and Enrollment. Regarding school facilities and enrollment, once-children provided descriptions of school grounds and validated the community's efforts to improve schooling conditions. Once-children also indicated that adults took efforts to establish and grow Rosenwald Schools overtime by community and family members donating land, and

then expanding schools from a "one-teacher school … to a two-teacher school building and …eventually …a four-teacher schoolhouse."[95]

The voices of once-children also revealed the material of which the school buildings were made (e.g., of “cinder blocks”) as well as how these buildings were used, spaced, and repurposed). A school building used for the elementary grades may later be transformed into “a place to prepare food for students.”[96] Some once-children indicated classes were sometimes held across multiple buildings and having to walk to different buildings. Some once-children indicated there were buildings for teenagers which include high schools,[97] and “a building for social life.”[98]

Once-children's voices also indicated an expanding student body. They provided descriptions of school enrollment increasing, becoming overcrowded, and sparking the Rosenwald School buildings' extension.[99] In other words, these qualitative testimonies confirmed and expanded upon the school conditions that had been otherwise documented in the quantitative/survey research.

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[95] Mary S Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South* (University Press of Florida, 2006), 225.

[96] Minnie Ruth Outlaw, “A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953,” 2013, 29.

[97] Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[98] Outlaw, “A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953,” 29.

[99] Outlaw, “A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953”; Betty J Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*, vol. 11 (McFarland, 2004); Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*.

Caring Approach and Academic Achievement. A number of sources on Rosenwald Schools have revealed the voices of once-children have spoken to the great value of their teachers caring approach to education.[100] Children's voices have often described teachers' and principals' caring approach toward building relationships with students and parents.[101] Some "caring" approaches once-children noted have been how teachers talked with students "about life";[102] us[ed] humor to bond with students;[103] and encourage[ed] children to achieve and aspire to college despite personal obstacles.[104]

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[100] Katherine Eriksson, "Access to Schooling and the Black-White Incarceration Gap in the Early 20th Century U.S. South: Evidence from Rosenwald Schools," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 2015; Tom Hanchett, "Beacons for Black Education in the American South," *Rosenwald Schools* 12 (2004); Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*; Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953"; Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*; Siddle Walker, "Caswell County Training School, 1933–1969: Relationships between Community and School"; Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South"; Siddle Walker, "Caswell County Training School, 1933–1969: Relationships between Community and School."

[101] Mary S Hoffschwelle, "Children of the Rosenwald Schools and the American South," in *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and the Material Culture of Children*, by Marta Gutman and Ning De Coninck-Smith (Rutgers University Press, 2008), 213–32; Bruce A Glasrud, Archie P McDonald, and Alwyn Barr, *Blacks in East Texas History: Selections from the East Texas Historical Journal; Edited by Bruce A. Glasrud and Archie P. McDonald; Foreword by Cary D. Wintz; with Contributions by Alwyn Barr...[et Al.].* (Texas A&M University Press, 2008); Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*; Siddle Walker, "Caswell County Training School, 1933–1969: Relationships between Community and School."

[102] Siddle Walker, "Caswell County Training School, 1933–1969: Relationships between Community and School," 69.

[103] Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*.

[104] Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*; Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*.

In addition, once-children remembered and described academic environments that included various subjects, messages of achievement, discipline, and community responsibility.[105] Once-children's voices often indicated these academic teachings left an impression on their lives. For example, once-children of Brevard Rosenwald School "attribute success in their own adult lives to the lessons and values inculcated at their Rosenwald School."[106]

Activities. Once-children's voiced perspectives described the various activities children participated.[107] Once-children of the Louisiana Training School indicated their daily activities involved spirituality, creativity, and citizenship rituals.[108] They also reported typical school days in the classroom began with morning "devotion, singing songs, praying, reciting Bible verses, and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance [to the American flag]."[109]

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[105] Hoffschwelle, "Children of the Rosenwald Schools and the American South"; Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953"; Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*; Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*.

[106] Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*, 226.

[107] Hoffschwelle, "Children of the Rosenwald Schools and the American South"; Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953"; Betty Jamerson Reed, "The Brevard Rosenwald School: An Historical Case Study" (Ed.D., Ann Arbor, Western Carolina University, 2000), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (230924259), http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/230924259?accountid=14667; Siddle Walker, "Caswell County Training School, 1933–1969: Relationships between Community and School"; Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*; Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South."

[108] Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953."

[109] Outlaw, 32.

Once-children's voices also have illuminated teachers' commitment to providing and leading extracurricular activities.[110] Per once-children, teachers created clubs such as basketball teams and served as advisors to create the school's "first yearbook."[111] They report that Rosenwald Schools offered an array of extracurricular activities, including a diverse variety of sports, creative, academic, and social clubs. A few activities named by once-children across the studies were "spelling bees,"[112] basketball teams, music programs, school newspapers, homemakers' clubs, math clubs, and debate clubs.[113]

In addition to recreational activities, in some accounts, once-children briefly described completing activities or tasks that contributed to the school's functioning.[114] For example, some children indicated "helping build the fire in the classroom stove to heat the school."[115] But these

[110] Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953"; Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*; Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*.

[111] Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953," 51.

[112] Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*, 11:37.

[113] Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953"; Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*; Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*.

[114] Hoffschwelle, "Children of the Rosenwald Schools and the American South"; Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953"; Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966*; Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*.

[115] Outlaw, "A History of The Louisa Training School in Louisa County, Virginia, 1926-1953," 32.

accounts on the part of children have been mostly episodic in larger historical narratives that have rendered Rosenwald Schools (which were also pre-Brown segregated schools) as lacking in resources and providing poor academics. The voices of once-children had been a critical source in establishing the value and goodness of Black schools, which included the care and advocacy provided by Black teachers, principals, and parents.[116] Across these studies on Rosenwald Schools, Black once-children describe and validate the work of educators, administrators, and community members to found and improve the conditions of school buildings, grow enrollment, and provide a range of activities for children. In addition, the findings of this review primarily evidenced and foregrounded the efforts on the part of adults to provide caring learning environments in which children were disciplined and advised.

The issue which arises is that in providing the aforementioned insights into the experience of Rosenwald Schools, Black children's voices are mostly episodic as there are very few instances in which the Black once-children are quoted at length, and when Black children are specifically cited their agency is dwarfed relative to the agency of adults. That is, we are provided with no thick descriptions[117] of Black children's actions in and around Rosenwald Schools, nor how they felt about these actions. The foregrounded actions were that of the adults (e.g., teachers, principals) who were acting on behalf of the children. The adults were, therefore, situated as the agents and the children as the recipients of that agency.

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[116] Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*; V. S. Walker, "Valued Segregated Schools for African American Children in the South, 1935-1969: A Review of Common Themes and Characteristics," *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 3 (January 1, 2000): 253–85, https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070003253.

[117] (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010)

The episodic appearances and marginalized agency of Black children within these texts render the children 'bit characters' in the history of Rosenwald Schools. By definition, a bit character:

> … is a minor character in the cast. She or he has a slightly larger part than the extra, but isn't a well-known actor… while they may have some eccentricity to make them interesting, a bit character is generally a flat character…"[118]

In other words, as characters in the history of Rosenwald Schools, Black children are usually represented as one-dimensional characters[119] who make episodic appearances in the historical narrative. As bit characters, Black children are slightly accessible (i.e., imagined, tracked, surveyed, interviewed) but still flat; paper dolls to be moved about the historical narrative, but storiless, emotionless benefactors –unknown actors who are to be acted upon.

The notion that Black children have been reduced to bit characters in the literature about pre-Brown segregated schools in general, and Rosenwald schools in particular, has been confirmed by the assessments of other scholars. Although a great deal of interview data associated with these findings are drawn from once-children of Rosenwald Schools, scholars assert Black children's stories are missing or limited in the literature on Rosenwald Schools too. In fact, Vanessa Siddle Walker[120] characterizes Black children as "non-players" in the historical narratives of Rosenwald School. She writes:

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[118] http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BitCharacter

[119] http://thewritingtools.blogspot.com/2009/07/one-two-and-three-dimensional_26.html

[120] Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*.

> Throughout the themes, the omission of students as major players in defining the school's goodness is evident. Students were the reason for the efforts of the adults, but students were not themselves asked to explain the environment created. Although they held club positions that allowed them to advise the administration of the school [and other roles] …[nonetheless] students in the general memory assume the role of recipients. They are the ones around whom the entire story evolves, but they are not significant players in the story. Caring adults are the benefactors. Most often, the student's role was to gain from the environment and absorb the messages adults generated.[121]

In other words, in the general memory of historical research, Black children have no substantial role as agents who contribute to schools' culture and dynamics; the children are merely actors who benefit from school. The adults are the benefactors – the real players who make the miracle of schooling happen for the children – without children themselves having a role to play.

Mary Hoffschwelle[122] additionally indicated that Rosenwald students' voices in the early 1900s are not there and so we do not know how Black children emotionally experienced schooling. Hoffschwelle writes, "How these schools looked and felt to children in the 1910s and 1920s is difficult to document or recapture."[123] Hoffschwelle's assertion about a void of Black children's voices coupled with Siddle-Walkers assertion about a vacuum of Black children's

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[121] Siddle Walker, 212.

[122] Hoffschwelle, "Children of the Rosenwald Schools and the American South."

[123] Hoffschwelle, 222.

agentic presence in her study on Caswell Rosenwald School, makes plain there is a void of Black children's voices and agentic presence in the historical narrative of Rosenwald Schools.

The absence of marginalization of Black children's voices and agentic presence in pre-Brown literature and, in particular, literature related to Rosenwald Schools presents a gap that has limited our ability to capture in a more complex or textured way that which characterized Black children and Black childhood experience during this historical time and the implications for how we understand Black schooling and education in the pre-Brown era. With these limitations in the literature in mind, I have pursued a dissertation study that examined what might be learned about the agency of Black children and the character of Black childhood in and around pre-Brown segregated schools if we were to foreground the vantage and perspective of Black children.

My research questions seek to understand the voices of then-children and once-children who attended Pickens County Rosenwald Schools (PCRS) between 1940 and 1969 reveal Black children's presence and experiences in PCRS? Towards this end, I examine (a) what do the oral histories and material objects of Black children who attended Pickens County Rosenwald Schools (1940 - 1969) tell us about (a) the experience of Black childhood in and around these settings; and (b) what do these childhood experiences reveal about how Black children may (or may not have) have influenced the culture, organization, or dynamics of pre-Brown segregated schools? My goal is to understand how in foregrounding the perspectives and products of Black children, we might (a) develop distinct or nuanced understandings of the experiences and agency of Black children in and around (i.e., home and community) Pickens County Rosenwald Schools; and (b) by implication, expand our understanding of Black *childhood* in this space and time?

Chapter III | Research Design, Site, and Methods

Methodology

To capture and foreground expressions of childhood shown by PCRS then-children and once-children, I employ a critical childhood studies framework (CCS), which "calls for explorations of children's actions, contributions, social relationships, and cultures, and for seeing these as worthy of study in their own right, not only in relation to adult concerns.[124] Focusing on who children are, CCS "gives importance to what children say, think, and feel, and who they are, as full participants in social processes, not just what they are becoming."[125] A CCS framework helps to explore children's voices by centering children as worthy of exploration and rightfully central to understanding the experiences and agency of children.

In contrast to the presumptions and presuppositions that drive CCS, studies in education that foreground Black children rarely make central Black children's expressions of childhood. One reason might be a lack of focus on Black childhood "in *the now."*[126] That is, many studies in education often focus on children's "future existence or accomplishments" without attention to Black children's experiences in the present" and their ability to impact their worlds now.[127] For

[124] Dumas and Nelson, "(Re) Imagining Black Boyhood"; Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, *Translating Childhoods: Immigrant Youth, Language, and Culture*, The Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

[125] Orellana, *Translating Childhoods*, 2009, 16.

[126] Dumas and Nelson, "(Re) Imagining Black Boyhood"; Orellana, *Translating Childhoods*, 2009.

[127] Ibid.

example, some studies on Rosenwald children have focused on what children became (i.e., graduation rates, career paths) in order to evidence the schools' success. [128] But, focusing on who children became does not provide a window into the "now" of childhood, which may eclipse the opportunity to understand Black children as possessors of childhood. In this study, I explore Pickens County Rosenwald School (PCRS) children's lived experiences as children in "the now" of the pre-Brown era. This study does not aspire to focus on the children's aspirations for adulthood or who they became, but rather, I focus my examination on who the children were while attending PCRS.

In order to access the knowledges of PCRS schoolchildren, who as children and as African Americans, are members of historically marginalized groups, I take a critical historians approach which "look[s] beneath the surface" of their current adult status to access their childhood voice and experience.[129] Alridge asserts, that historians must "look beneath the surface to see that historically oppressed and marginalized groups often construct their own epistemologies, which may be uncovered through nontraditional methods of historical research."[130] I therefore draw upon the logic and assumptions of ethnohistory methods to help me look underneath the surface of adulthood to find, explore, examine, and understand what once-

[128] Katherine Eriksson, "Access to Schooling and the Black-White Incarceration Gap in the Early 20th Century US South: Evidence from Rosenwald Schools" (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2015); Reed, The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachian Town, 1920-1966.

[129] Alridge, "The Dilemmas, Challenges, and Duality of an African-American Educational Historian," 31.

[130] Alridge, 31.

children and then-children of PCRS said, thought, felt and did as children in school. William Simmons[131] defines ethnohistory:

> [A]s a form of cultural biography that draws upon as many kinds of testimony as possible-material culture, archaeology, visual sources, historical documents, native texts, folklore, even earlier ethnographies over as long a time period as the sources allow. One cannot do this without taking account both of local-level social history and the larger scale social and cultural environments that affected that history. This kind of holistic, diachronic approach is most rewarding when it can be joined to the memories and voices of living people.[132]

As informed by Simmons, I join the voices of participants and their articulated memories with material objects and diverse historical sources found in institutional archives and personal collections (i.e., yearbooks, magazines, newspapers, memory books, and photographs) to access participants' childhoods. I understand, that in relying on memories I am unable to capture thoughts, feelings, and practices as they were understood in childhood and that any memories evoked are necessarily filtered and refracted via the participants' full life history and present circumstances. Even with these limitations, memory is a critical source for unearthing the un-recorded and under-recorded histories of marginalized peoples. [133] Confino notes that memory,

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[131] Simmons, "Culture Theory in Contemporary Ethnohistory."

[132] Simmons, 10.

[133] Aurora Levins Morales, "The Historian as Curandera, JSRI Working Paper #40" (Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, 1997); Divya Tolia-Kelly, "Locating Processes of Identification: Studying the Precipitates of Re-Memory through Artefacts in the British Asian Home," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29, no. 3 (2004): 314–

or “the ways in which people construct a sense of the past” has been used successfully to explore how people have experienced a particular historical event or circumstance and to correct and complexify historical accounts of said events or circumstances." [134] As Black childhoods have been un(der)recorded and underspecified historically, memory, voice and the material of historical Black childhoods are essential if we are to correct and complexify the historical record of Black childhood in this regard.

In working with memory, I employ novelist, Toni Morrison’s notion of rememory [135] which I use as a guide to conceptually braid together my methods of collecting various sources of data related to Black childhood memory in and around Rosenwald Schools. Rememory affords a means of accessing the past. Morrison illustrates the concept of rememory in her novel, Beloved (See Table 1). [136] By introducing the notion of “rememory” Morrison helps the reader to understand the complexity of memory – particularly how memories are always with us. Memories are living as they continue to happen in our thoughts and can be deeply recalled via revisiting the past whether physical spaces, and times that have marked our experiences are there or not.

29; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995).

[134] Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” The American Historical Review 102, no. 5 (1997): 1386.

[135] Toni Morrison, “Beloved. 1987,” New York: Plume, 1988, 252; Caroline Rody, “Toni Morrison’s Beloved: History," Rememory," and a" Clamor for a Kiss",” American Literary History 7, no. 1 (1995): 92–119.

[136] Morrison, “Beloved. 1987.”

Table 1 Rememory and Unpacking the Concept of a Thought Picture

Toni Morrison's Description of "Rememory."	*My Use of "Thought Picture"*
I used to think to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it is not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it is gone, but the place – the picture of it – stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. **What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head.** I mean, even if I do not think it, **even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there.** Right in the place where it happened… you hear something or see something going on. So clear. **And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real**. It's never going away. Even if…every blade grass dies. **The picture is still there** and what's more, **if you go there**—you who never was there – if you go there **and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again**; **it will be there for you, waiting for you**".[137]	What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. …even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real. The picture is still there if you go there and **stand in the place where it was, it will happen again**; it will be there for you, waiting for you."[138]

[137] Morrison, 43.

[138] Morrison, 43.

Morrison's notion of rememory confirms that the past is never wholly lost to us and might be tapped in ways that allow one to experience the past almost as if it never went away – to move, hear, and see today in ways that are akin to the time you are recalling via your rememory.

I use Toni Morrison's concept of a "thought picture" to capture moments of rememory as they are happening in the data. Recall, at a point in her text, Morrison references a 'thought picture' as just something "you think up" – a thought that could easily be dismissed as just a picture (See Table 1). However, Morrison goes on to explain that a thought picture is not frozen and stagnant in the past. Instead, a thought picture is a place that is still there – alive in the past. For example, she argues, "If a house burns down, it is gone, but the place – the picture of it – stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. …The picture is still there and what is more, if you go there… it will happen again…" Hence, rememory (i.e., the process of remembering) and the things associated with memory – whether tangible or intangible (e.g., a house or the recollection of a house that no longer exist) can be visualized in your mind as it was in a particular time and space. Although the material has changed or no longer exist in the material world – like a building that no longer exists – the thing persists through thought pictures (i.e., the mental pictures we hold of people, places, events, experiences). These thought pictures persist through the process of holding memory, returning to a place (literally and/or figuratively) and sharing memory through storied images – whether tangible or intangible. In other words, history *is* in the past, but it is not frozen. History is also living now through data we hold and visit in our mental archives and share through our voice. I interpret these mental archives to be what Toni Morrison calls *thought pictures*.

Extending how I think about ethnohistorical methodologies, which call for the collection of various forms of historical data as well as interviews, the idea of rememory as conveyed

through "thought pictures" – illustrates that these various forms of historical data hold a living past that can be sensed and thereby experienced. Tolia-Kelly, indicates that you can stimulate rememory "through scents, sounds and textures in the everyday."[139] As such, I walked my participants through a process of *rememory, by* inviting them to return to "scraps" of personal histories through the tangible material of then-children – physical spaces, artifacts, long packed away childhood possessions, or recollection of material when objects are no longer in their possession. Through this process I re-entered childhoods as if the once-children and I were actually standing in the place of their childhoods and recalling this place and time as if it were now; together, making the place *happen again*. To do this work, I collected oral history interviews, and material objects. Also, in accordance with an ethnohistorical approach, institutional archival sources are used alongside material objects from once-children's personal collections and oral histories to examine Black children's voices inside different kinds of testimony. Different from once-children's personal collections, archival sources provide primary sources and material objects related to the Rosenwald Program collected by various players (i.e., school leaders, field agents, and teachers, photographers, etc.) on a national and sometimes local scale, and that provided context to further historicize the development of Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County, the historical presence of Black childhood within the Program, and support the analysis of children's experiences in the Program during the time period of study. Below I specify how the epistemological and methodological frameworks that guide this work are evidenced in my site selection and methods of data collection.

Researcher Positionality

[139] Tolia-Kelly, "Locating Processes of Identification," 314.

Although it is not customary for historians to name their positionality in historical research, as an African American I think it is important for historians to provide some insight into the vantages and perspectives they bring to their historical work. As an African American my view of the past and approach to historical research has been informed by my awareness that historians cannot achieve complete objectivity. This is evident in the ways historical research has silenced or erased the voices and perspectives of marginalized peoples and more specifically African American people. [140] As previously stated, research has shown historical voices of Black people have been silenced as they have been rendered in ways that more often reflect the voices and perspectives of Western constructions of African Americans rather than Blacks understandings and constructions of themselves.[141] Research also indicates collecting practices (i.e., archiving of historical documents, artifacts, etc.) of African Americans experiences have been scant or selective in ways that have contributed to the erasure of African Americans experiences and perspectives in the institutional archives which are spaces historians rely upon for primary data sources. The silencing and erasure of Black voices and experiences in historical research and archives is also true of histories of Black children in and around schools as research shows Black children's voices were rarely documented and when apparent have not illuminated children's experiences and perspectives as understood by them.[142]

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[140] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995).

[141] Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (WW Norton & Company, 2019).

[142] King, *African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights*; King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*; Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1996); Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*, 2006.

As an African American historian, it is important to me that I enter these silences and erasures to search for what else can be known about the experiences and perspectives of my people. At the same time, it is also important that I am careful not to reproduce the silences and erasures I am to address. Hence, it has been important for me to reflect upon the affordances and limitations of my own subjectivity and positionality in the implementation of this study.

My subjectivity as a once-child with ancestral roots in the Deep South (i.e., Pickens County, Alabama), and my up bringing in de facto racial segregation on Chicago's Southside informed the approaches I used to address historical silencing and erasure, to unearth voices and perspectives of Black children, and my selection of African American segregated schools (particularly Pickens County Rosenwald Schools) as my site of study. My positionality as a doctoral student, educator in out of school spaces, and artist have informed how I employ ethnohistorical methods and my community-based approach to historical research. In the next section, I will first discuss my subjectivity as a once-child with ancestral links to Pickens and childhood experiences living in a racially segregated community which included attending de facto racially segregated and integrated schools in Chicago. Then I will discuss my positionality as a doctoral student, educator, and artist.

Connections to the Deep South and Cultivating Trust

My familial and ancestral connection to Pickens County position me as both an insider and an outsider. I am an insider because my maternal grandparents and my mother lived in Pickens County, Alabama (i.e., the town of Ethelsville) until 1959. This history indirectly ties me to this place. Furthermore, although my grandparents have passed away, my mother has

remained connected to family members living in Ethelsville, including my grandfather's sister, Sylvia Neal Richardson, and her twelve adult children (who are my mother's first cousins).[143]

In addition to my mother's connection, my 1988 visit to Pickens County for a family reunion established me in the family's collective memory, especially peer cousins who I spent a lot of time with during the visit. Recollections of times spent in 1988 would later aid in my acceptance by the family and their willingness to provide key supports to my research study in 2015, including entering the site of study and data collection. Some points of recollection were fostered through the sharing of photographs back and forth between family members and me. For example, my photographs like those pictured in Figure 3were key pieces of the past that aided in relationship building as I returned to Pickens. These photographs served as illustrations of our past familial connections made during my visit in 1988. As an insider who remained in

Figure 3 Me in Pickens County in 1988 with family members. The photo on the left shows peer cousins (left to right Faye, Me, Regina, and Ella). The photo on the right depicts Aunt Sylvia pictured wearing glasses, a white tank, and fuchsia pants. She is surrounded by many of her children, grandchildren and great nieces and nephews.

[143] When I began the dissertation study in 2015, my Aunt Sylvia was 87 years old. At the time of completion of this dissertation, in 2020, she is 92 years old.

Figure 4 My great-great grandfather, Selvin Neal and my great aunt, Sylvia who I lived with during data collection. Circa 1940s. Sylvia Neal Richardson Collection.

possession of these photographs (and others), I signaled my reverence for having connected with my family during that time, and I was able to share them when I returned to Pickens over 20 years later. Additionally, the photos elicited collective memory of our shared experiences and good feelings associated with the reunion. As we reminisced about the event, photographs often generated feelings of association and reconnection which in turn prompted family members to share photos with me. For example, Figure 4 includes a photograph of my Great Grandfather (left), Selvin Neal who I would learn has the status of an urban legend within the community – a moonshiner, affluent by local standards, and who "didn't take nothin' from nobody." In this photograph, he is pictured in what appears to be an everyday photograph (he is outside of his home beside his truck) with two guns, one on each hip. This image provided me a visual image that I associated with the stories often told to me by family members and complete strangers alike (once I identified myself to a new acquaintance as Selvin Neal's great granddaughter).

The photo on the right is that of a young Great Aunt Sylvia (Selvin's daughter), who I lived with on most of my visits. The photo also represents making connections in the family – particularly the continued sharing of legacy. When Aunt Sylvia gifted me this photograph, she handed it to me saying, "Baby, make sure you put my picture in your book." While Aunt Sylvia did not have a deep familiarity with the dissertation process, she understood it was an act of knowledge making, history making, and she wanted me to be sure to include her in the history. In other words, she noted the importance of being documented and legible within history – our history. The photographs affirmed our past connection and created a sense of a shared historical legacy. The back and forth sharing of family photographs and stories aided in my ability to connect, build, and strengthen relationships with family members. In short, we were doing our own work to fill gaps and silences that existed within our own family and filling these gaps afforded us the opportunity to forge relationships and create at least one layer of trust as a great niece and cousin.

The trust built through remembering our past gathering and sharing photographs underwrote family members willingness to support my stays and their offers helped with my project. For example, I didn't have to find housing which would have been difficult in this rural community where things are spread far apart and there are no hotels or Airbnb's nearby. I lived with family members each summer. In addition, family members generally wanted to help me collect data for the study. Hence, they connected me with key informants who helped me identify participants for the study and provided vital information related to local institutions and individuals who held pertinent archival information. These key connections included links to Rosenwald School alumni association leaders and members, local African American historians, authors, and a photographer, as well as leads on how to access archival documents at the Board

of Education, the County Courthouse, and local libraries. Without the help of my family and key informants[144] (who often helped me because of my blood connection to the Neal family), many of these resources would have been very difficult (taken a lot of time) or impossible to access (unknown sources of information) while identifying and gaining access to other sources (e.g., institutional archives, libraries, etc.). Overall, familial help provided me more immediate access to key informants and vouched for me as a trusted interloper and helped me identify and access local institutions which saved valuable time.

My connection to Pickens as my ancestral land impacted me as a researcher. As I stepped into Pickens County I also bumped into the past as I experienced fragments of the past in structures, language, customs, food, and the natural environment. While I had to be careful not to engage in presentism – I had not stepped into the Jim Crow South – as a researcher, living in Pickens for months at a time I had opportunities to observe and participate in the everyday lives of family and community members. These experiences gave me a sense of the culture, food, and customs – some of which have endured over time. Whether I tried to make (and fumbled) my cousin, Scil's outstanding cornbread recipe (as she observed and laughed), or sat with my Great Aunt Sylvia and talked with her about her brother's (i.e., my grandfather's) experiences moonshining, went to Sunday church, or sang *with* the Providence Choir (which was composed of all family members), or raced the night roads to Bingo with Aunt Sylvia, Scil, Willie, Ella,

[144] I found key informants were also more willing to help me because of. my familial ties to Pickens County. For example, when initially entering the field, many local residents referred to me as "Ollie Rose's granddaughter" rather than Kim. Many people associated me with her and their memories of her as a teacher, a creative person, and a "sweet" person. I was often met with the phrase, "Ohhhhh, you grandmother was so sweet." Their fondness for her often seemed to be the catalyst for community members extending fondness and care to me – particularly their willingness to help my project.

Faye, Peter, Doll, Sonny, Fred, Perlinsa, Penny, Chester, Pee-Wee, and Sister – I felt belonging and a deep sense of family as I was invited into and enjoyed everyday life.

But too, these connections varied as some family members signaled that they still questioned my motives for returning. For example, most of Aunt Sylvia's children who also attended Rosenwald Schools during the 1950s and 1960s declined to be interviewed. Others who did participate were initially hesitant to do so. There were also concerns about my taking and profiting from stories I collected. One older cousin once asked me, "So, are you writing a book? Are you going to get paid for that?" Natural hesitancies related to participating in the study, curiosities about my being in Pickens and how I might personally gain from my research made me keenly aware of my outsider status (which I will discuss in more detail in the section related to my positionality as a researcher) and my responsibility to answer these questions and curiosities and make clear my intentions. I also sensed that it was important that my intentions were clearly stated through my deeds.

Living with and among family and community in Pickens, I grew to understand everyone listens to what you say but also read what you do. For example, I learned word traveled fast. I would typically leave my Aunt's home each morning to collect data or to sit at a coffeeshop and write. When I would return home in the evening, a family member would mention, "Yeah, I heard you was up there talkin' with Ms. Thomas today." Or "Yeah, I heard you were over there at Reform Library today – you find anything?" How people learned my movements throughout the towns before I mentioned them I may never know but this quickly taught me that my deeds were just as significant as any assurances I could make regarding my intentions. Therefore, I always moved through the community with honesty, humility, and a willingness to observe and learn. I was no expert and no matter how deeply I cultivated my connections, they only hit the surface of

the community's deep-rooted networks and relationships. In short, I was certainly welcomed, and fondly regarded, and at the same time a watched and tolerated family guest.

A Southside Girl, Segregation Experiences and Seeing Goodness

Although my family hails from Pickens County, Alabama, I was born and raised in Roseland, Chicago located on the City's South-Side in the all-Black segregated neighborhood called Sheldon Heights. Born in the 1970s, I am a daughter of desegregation – a once-child whose parents felt the sting of racial segregation under the norms and laws of Jim Crow. My friends and I were the first to live beyond the gate of Plessy vs. Ferguson. Our generation was a continuance of the Dream. Yet, I attended (unknowingly and happily) a little de facto segregated community school tucked in the Southside of Chicago. Like my mother, who as a child grew up in the Deep South running from her house down the street to her Rosenwald School (Mamiesville Elementary)– I ran from my grandmother's house, down the street to my little school, Charles H. Wacker Elementary.

When I entered the schoolhouse doors, I felt engulfed in love. My teachers knew my name, they knew my disposition, they supported my joy and demanded my intellect and attention. I also felt surrounded by visual and cultural artifacts that affirmed our existence as Black children worthy of quality education. My Principal, Dr. Howard Felder, and Assistant Principal Ms. Perry made sure the main hallways were laced with photographs of Wacker's eighth grade graduates – chins up and distinguished looking in their caps and gowns at the ripe ages of 13-years-old. These faces greeted me each morning as I walked through the school doors and looked up. We were required to learn the Black National Anthem, and each day before we opened our texted books for our lesson, we would stand to sing *"Left every voice and sing till earth and heaven rings, rings with the harmony of liberty… ."* We had science fairs, poetry

competitions, a theater company, a chess club, a tennis club, a tumbling team, basketball, cheerleading, a school newspaper (which all grades, K-8, were required to contribute literary submissions and artwork), assemblies to celebrate historic African American leaders and traditions, and the list goes on.

Figure 5 provides an illustration of the types of experiences Wacker regularly offered. In this document retrieved from the Chicago Defender (1975) Judge Russell DeBow addressed elementary students and fielded "vital questions posed by …students."[145] The photograph provides one example of how Black children's agency was affirmed and cultivated. Specifically, the children were so highly regarded—even at an elementary age—that the administration would

Figure 5 "Judge goes to school..." Charles H. Wacker Elementary School. March 22, 1975. Chicago Defender

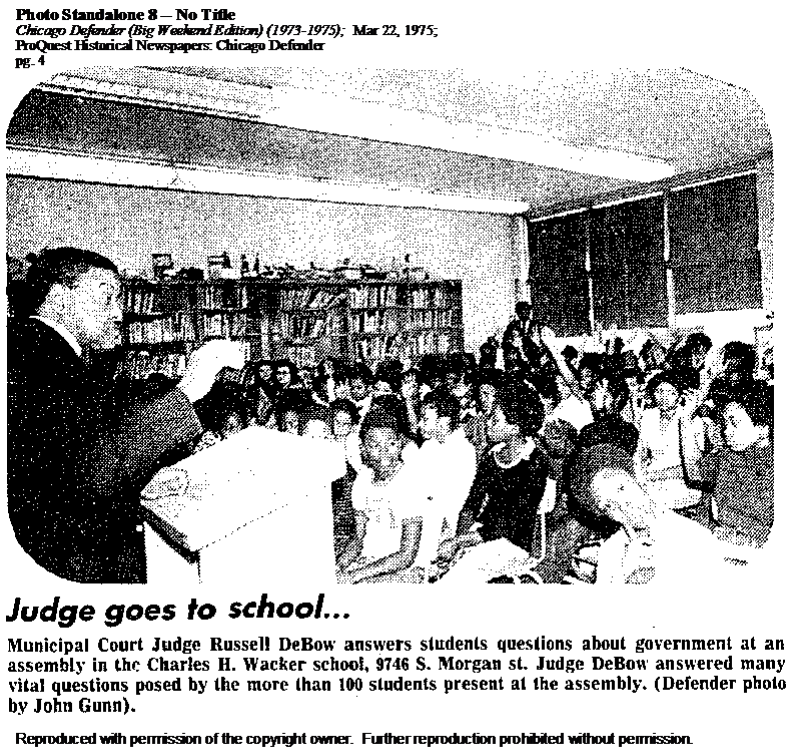


Photo Standalone 8 -- No Title
Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1973-1975); Mar 22, 1975;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender
pg. 4

Judge goes to school...

Municipal Court Judge Russell DeBow answers students questions about government at an assembly in the Charles H. Wacker school, 9746 S. Morgan st. Judge DeBow answered many vital questions posed by the more than 100 students present at the assembly. (Defender photo by John Gunn).

[145] "Photo Standalone 8 -- No Title," *Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1973-1975)*, March 22, 1975.

pull in highly regarded community leaders to speak with children about societal issues and careers. Essentially, providing us children with positive images as well as real life connections. Furthermore, these opportunities as well as student's accomplishments (i.e., science fair winners, student ran car washes, etc.) were often featured in the Chicago Defender. These experiences gave me a deep since of pride in my little segregated school and informed my views about the diverse resources these segregated spaces offered Black children.[146]

At the same time, I recall my classmates and I experienced resource constraints which is consistent with research on segregated schools. For example, at our school, we experienced overcrowding. Specifically, I recall my second and third grade years were attended in a "Willie Wagon" which were mobile homes placed on the playground as remote classrooms. These mobile homes were very controversial at the time because parents and more broadly the Black community saw these mobile units as resistance from the City to address overcrowding in Black and Hispanic schools by integrating students of color into white schools. Rather than pushing school integration, the City set up mobile classrooms. I also recall having used books – some of which we could not take home because there weren't enough books for everyone. But overall, in my elementary schooling experiences, I didn't grow up feeling under resourced, unloved, underrepresented, nor academically ill equipped. I felt good – in fact – I felt great.

My experiences within my segregated elementary school inform my view of Black segregated schools. Specifically, I understand that these schools could be simultaneously resourced and under resourced. For example, while my school suffered from overcrowding, and

[146] Jacqueline J Irvine and JW Fraser, "Warm Demanders," *Education Week* 17, no. 35 (1998): 56–57; Franita Ware, "Warm Demander Pedagogy Culturally Responsive Teaching That Supports a Culture of Achievement for African American Students," *Urban Education* 41, no. 4 (2006): 427–56.

had used, limited books, we also had deep and abundant resources via our school leadership, teachers and administrators who worked hard to provide academic and social experiences that fostered our development. This has helped me to expand my conceptions of school resources to include not only school related materials (e.g., books, classrooms), but also adults (e.g., teachers, and school leaders), parents, community members and children as possible resources in segregated schools. This informed my choice to examine children's experiences in and around schools verses only in the schoolhouse.

I also understand I cannot generalize my experience having attended segregated schools across segregated schools more broadly. I attended de facto segregated schools in the North and post legal segregation. I am aware that while I may have some similarities with my participants – namely spending my childhood in an African American elementary school, these two sites of schooling – Chicago (urban northern city) post Jim Crow and Pickens (rural southern town) in Jim Crow are very different. And so, while my experience informs my view that segregated African American schools held goodness, I also must be mindful that my experience cannot be generalized onto the experiences of my participants. My experiences and perspectives only pushed me as a researcher to look for both goodness and challenges related to schooling that once-children recalled experiencing in their oral history interviews and in my data analysis.

Southern Roots, Sweet Tongues, Ham Mercies, and Honoring Language

My acquaintance with Southern African American dialect has informed my approach to conducting oral histories. Specifically, my experiences of having been engulfed in voices of the Deep South during my childhood have helped me to build rapport in interviews and to search for meaning and understanding in not only what was told to me in interviews but how things were articulated.

Each evening after elementary school, I would return to my Grandmother's house to wait for my mother to pick me up after work. For those few hours I was engulfed in the tongues and traditions of the Deep South. I was surrounded in the poetic language, accent, food, love, and strength of my grandmother, Ollie Rose, and her sisters and my great aunties, Anna Ruth, Susie, and Vera.

I have one vivid memory of my Aunt Vera Davis always singing 'Precious Lord.' In church, at funerals, and sometimes at family functions if the spirit so moved her. If she felt something needed a bit of healing or rejoicing or fixing, she would sing there too. As children, my cousins and I didn't understand it. We would giggle and glance eyes at one another which conveyed, *"Oh Lord, here she go again."* Our beloved Great-Auntie was not a particularly grand singer. Her voice would crack as she pushed it to higher and higher heights. But she stood her ground like Aretha Franklin belting out this historic song. She would stretch and push her voice to its limits and make it run marathons as tears would well in her eyes. She'd unexpectedly stop, stomp her right foot, thrust a bow forward and scream, *"Ham Mercy!!!"* when the spirit engulfed her. I didn't understand it but wanted to understand. Why was Aunt Vera and others in the room, much older than me, so taken, so shook, so emotional?

In my efforts as a child to dissect and make sense of the scene, I homed in on the words, "ham mercy." I remember clearly inquiring to my mother, *"Ma, what does 'ham' have to do with mercy?"* She laughed and told me, *"Oh no, she's not really saying ham – she's saying 'have' mercy." I thought, "Have mercy? That's what she's saying?"* While I understood what my mother told me, I wasn't convinced that the word "ham" was saying the same thing as 'have.' Ham meant something more and *it* – whatever *it* was – pinched the heart of Aunt Vera, made her believe she could sing, called her to shout, and express in heart what was otherwise unspeakable – unable to

be captured in a sterile word like 'have'. *Ham* held her story, and me and my cousins, giggling on the sidelines, did not. We didn't know anything about her life beyond her being our Auntie/Grandma. That was it. But the notion of *ham mercy* and what it represented has stayed with me.

Perhaps *ham* mercy was my first introduction to what I would later call an NVivo code. My experiences with Aunt Vera's singing and others have taught me that these sayings, expressions, and dialects carry their own meanings. These types of lived experiences have seeded my attention to the stories my participants told as well as the language they used to convey their stories and the possible meanings these tellings held. My disposition towards African American Southern dialect (gifted to me by my grandmother and her siblings who spent their childhoods in Pickens) has helped me in the oral history interview process as well as coding and analysis. In oral history interviews, I found I was quite familiar with participants' dialect and sayings. Where I was not familiar with dialect or sayings I felt comfortable to ask for clarity because like the little girl trying to pull meaning from my Aunt Vera's *ham mercy,* I approached those moments as a learner of another language. Privileging and respecting the participants' dialect and knowledge aided in my ability to cultivate comfortability and trust in oral history interviews which allowed for more in-depth and robust sharing.

Researcher, Educator, Artist

My positionality as a researcher is two-fold. As previously mentioned, I am intimately tied to my grands – ancestral souls that grew up in extreme racial oppression and segregation. I grew up and attended schools in de facto racial segregation on Chicago's Southside. In spaces in and around school I have had lived experiences that embodied the spirit, strength, perseverance, and joy that springs from Black communities which includes the schools they support.

As a researcher my knowledge about histories of Black children and Black education in the South extends beyond my personal lived experiences. I am not blind to the histories of slavery, sharecropping, poverty, and racial oppression that have endured in my place of study and throughout the Deep South. This knowledge guided my search for contextual information about Pickens County's history of Black education and Black children's voices and presence therein. Specifically, my experience as a researcher coupled with my subjectivity as a descendant supported my ability to search for data in traditional and non-traditional spaces. I found there were both affordances and limitations related to my dual character which I learned to navigate. For example, in some institutional spaces (i.e., university libraries) my position as a doctoral student and affiliation with the University of Michigan helped me to gain access to collections, funds for research travel and data collection. In other spaces (i.e., among community members) my researcher identity and university affiliation took a back seat to my Pickens identity. My Pickens descendant identity (i.e., "Ollie Rose Davis's Granddaughter," or "Arthur Neal's Granddaughter, or "Redbird's daughter,") would often be the key that would inspire people to help me gain access to various informants throughout the community.

I also had a dual identity – not solely researcher and not solely descendant. I was both and these entangled identities were also important. My dual identity – Ollie Rose's Granddaughter who was working on her Ph.D. – became a source of pride and an asset who people wanted to help and, in some cases, receive help from (e.g., sing with the Sunday choir, decipher documents for energy savings, attend Sunday dinners, etc.). In cases where I was asked for help personally, I had to balance providing mentorship where I could without taking on tasks that were beyond the scope of my researcher role. This was a balancing act because as a researcher you are asking the community to help you. As a researcher I felt these tensions

because I did not want my work to seem or be one-sided. In other words, I had asked my family and the broader community to help me, it was important for me to determine ways I would help the community.

Previously, I mentioned I have had both an intimate and scholarly understanding of historical silences and erasures in histories of African American education. Parallel to these understandings, as a researcher I am guided by my desire to put my knowledge to work in partnership with the communities I research with the idea that we can learn and grow together while we use our combined knowledges to help address a community need or problem. My past expertise doing community-based work in Chicago as an educator and artist forwarded my efforts to use my historical research towards a community-based project that would benefit the Pickens community.

As an educator, I was interested in how the community could continue historical work after my dissertation project was done. My experiences working in community-based organizations and rallying communities around various programs and initiatives drove my interests in investigating whether the community had a need and desire to organize around a historical project. In other words, would the community be interested in work together to fill their own historical silences? And as an artist, I am always on the lookout for how African American history can be unsilenced publicly in artful ways educate and rouse. My position as a researcher, educator, and artist drove me to ask the following questions as I moved through the community meeting people, collecting data and thinking about how I might contribute to the community.

- Would they want to do something to preserve this history? How could I share some of the skills I have learned as a researcher with key community members so that they

could continue collecting oral histories and materials for themselves? If I found a way to do this, how might this spark interests in a preservation initiative?

- Once (and if) the community did start collecting, where would they store the data they amass? How could this data be made public so that the silences and erasures could be broken?
- How might a public space be used to educate young people and the broader community about the historical legacy of Black education in Pickens County?
- This would ultimately begin to close historical gaps in knowledge locally but also could have potential to close gaps for descendants (like me) who had been disconnected from the histories of their ancestral home (locally or in other places). How might the Pickens story connect to the broader Rosenwald School story throughout Alabama, the South and the Nation?

These questions would not be answered completely during my dissertation study, however these questions eventually led me to a group of informants who had been restoring their elementary school (Pickensville Elementary) for over 10 years and were interested in preserving local histories of African American education. Also, these questions sparked ongoing conversations that led us applying for and securing a public scholarship grant to establish a local museum in the schoolhouse. Ultimately, our collaboration resulted in the creation of a local museum, "The Historic Pickensville Rosenwald School Museum and Community Center" and outlined the future development of an online website and community archive.

Taken together – these pieces of me – the descendant, the African American once-child the researcher, and the public historian helped me to approach the Pickens

County community with a critical and caring approach to my dissertation study that has aided my data collection, analysis, and contemporary contribution to the past.

Site of Study

The site of study for my dissertation project is the small rural community of Pickens County, Alabama which is located on the central western boarder of Alabama, near Columbus, Mississippi. Pickens County was originally Native American territory; specifically belonging to the Creek (Muscogee), Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes. According to historical accounts I accessed in local libraries, Native Americans "ceded" their lands at different times between 1816 and 1830 [147] and Pickens County was "established" in 1820**.** [148]

Historical records have indicated there were Blacks who were enslaved in Pickens County. [149] For example, it has been documented that white northern businessmen interested in cotton production, brought enslaved African Americans to Pickens to work the cottonfields. [150] Furthermore, data on the migration of former slaves from the 1860 Slave Schedules in the United States Census evidence African Americans in Pickens County were enslaved during this time. "According to U.S. Census data, the 1860 Pickens County population included 10,117 whites, 8 "free colored" and 12,191 slaves. The Census shows "83 slaveholders who held 32 or more slaves in Pickens County, accounting for 4,786 slaves, or 39% of the county total. The rest of the

[147] "Records of Pickens County, Alabama (Open Library)," accessed April 12, 2016, https://openlibrary.org/books/OL4169722M/Records_of_Pickens_County_Alabama.

[148] "Pickens County, Alabama," in *Wikipedia*, April 17, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Pickens_County,_Alabama&oldid=836917232.

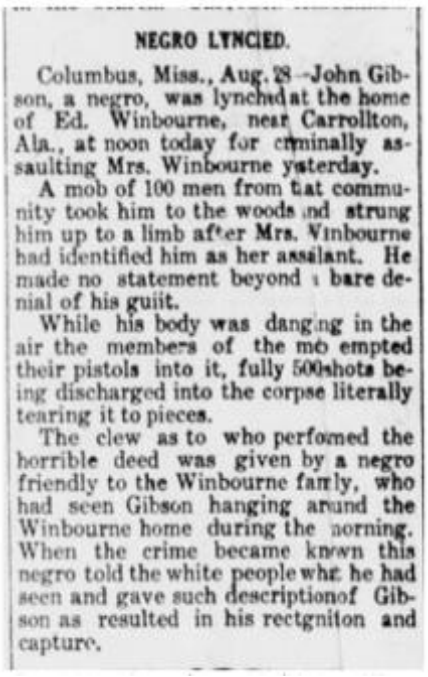
[149] "Records of Pickens County, Alabama (Open Library)."

[150] "Pickens County, Alabama."

slaves in the County were held by a total of 988 slaveholders, …" What is more, the 1850 census records show thirty-two members of my own family, the Neal's, were among the enslaved by Absalom L. Neal in Pickens County (Figure 39).[151] Although very few, I have also found oral histories from slaves who lived in Pickens.[152]

Beyond slavery, it has been documented that African Americans in Pickens County (like Alabama more broadly) endured racial oppression which included poverty, racial violence, and segregation. Census records (1920) have documented many Blacks were gripped by sharecropping, which was another form of enslavement levied by planters (whites) who would financially cheat Blacks, thereby tying Blacks to the land. Planters would often insist Blacks had not made their share of crops

Figure 6 Macon Beacon. (Macon, Miss.), 31 Aug. 1907 Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress



NEGRO LYNCIED.

Columbus, Miss., Aug. 28.—John Gibson, a negro, was lynched at the home of Ed. Winbourne, near Carrollton, Ala., at noon today for criminally assaulting Mrs. Winbourne yesterday.

A mob of 100 men from that community took him to the woods and strung him up to a limb after Mrs. Winbourne had identified him as her assalant. He made no statement beyond a bare denial of his guiit.

While his body was danging in the air the members of the mob empted their pistols into it, fully 500shots being discharged into the corpse literally tearing it to pieces.

The clew as to who perfomed the horrible deed was given by a negro friendly to the Winbourne family, who had seen Gibson hanging around the Winbourne home during the morning. When the crime became known this negro told the white people what he had seen and gave such descriptionof Gibson as resulted in his rectgniton and capture.

[151] "Absalom Neal - 1850 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules - Ancestry.Com," 1850, http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db=1850slaveschedules&gss=sfs28_ms_db&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=absalom&gsfn_x=0&gsln=neal&gsln_x=0&msrpn__ftp=Pickens%20County%2C%20Alabama%2C%20USA&msrpn=2348&msrpn_PInfo=7-%7C0%7C1652393%7C0%7C2%7C0%7C3%7C0%7C2348%7C0%7C0%7C0%7C&MSAV=1&uidh=000. I was struck by the erasure of my enslaved family members names from the document. Each enslaved person was listed solely by their age, race, and status as a slave. The ages of the enslaved ancestors spanned 27 years-old to one-years old.

[152] "Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons-Young," image, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, accessed May 7, 2018, https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn010/.

and consequently owed the planter thereby requiring Blacks to work off *false debts* [153].

In addition, Blacks in Pickens faced the terrors of racial violence and lynching. For example, in 2017 the Equal Justice Initiative report found there were 15 documented lynchings in Pickens County between 1877-1950, which was the fifth highest in the state of Alabama [154]. A publication in the Macon Beacon newspaper (Figure 6) documented one such account of a lynching in Pickens County (i.e., Carrollton) in 1907. [155]

Despite economic inequities and racial terror, Blacks in Pickens sought to educate Black children. The area had several "schools" which were makeshift but none-the-less provided a basis for education that would not otherwise have occurred for many coloreds." [156] Local

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[153] "1920 United States Federal Census - AncestryHeritageQuest.Com," accessed October 30, 2016, http://search.ancestryheritagequest.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=bFy2&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&indiv=1&db=1920usfedcen&gss=angs-d&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=John%20L.&gsfn_x=0&gsln=Nelson&gsln_x=0&msbdy=1915&msrpn__ftp=Louisiana,%20USA&msrpn=21&msrpn_PInfo=5-%7C0%7C1652393%7C0%7C2%7C0%7C21%7C0%7C0%7C0%7C0%7C0%7C&MSAV=1&uidh=mk5&pcat=35&fh=0&h=83847125&recoff=&ml_rpos=1; "Ancestry - Print 1910 United States Federal Census," accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.ancestry.com/inst/discoveries/PfRecord?collectionId=7884&recordId=9880266&language=en-US&ahsht=2016-10-30T12:48:11&ahsh=b3b81223855c3e2beee21615edeee47f; Douglas A Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (Anchor, 2008); Nate Shaw and Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (University of Chicago Press, 2000).

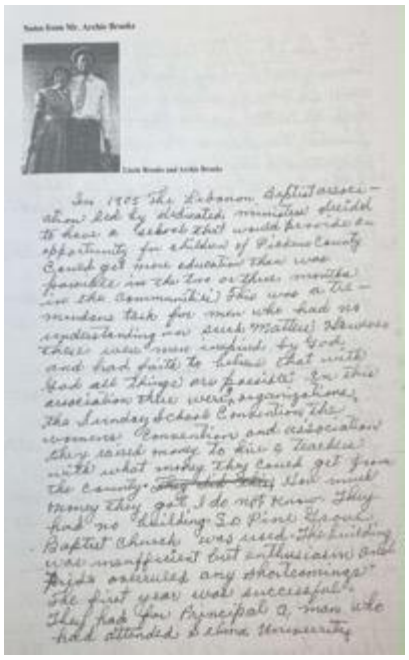
[154] Equal Justice Initiative, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* (Equal Justice Initiative, 2017), 2.

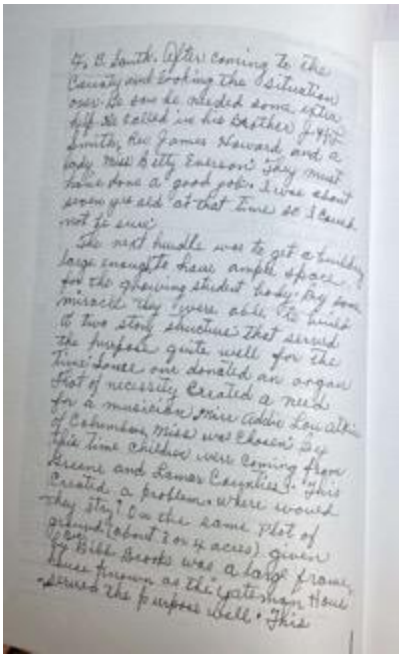
[155] During my fieldwork in 2015, I documented an off the cuff conversation with my Great Aunt Sylvia Neal who was 91 years of age at that time. She recalled the racial violence during her time growing up in Ethelsville. She said to me "they used to just slaughter our men… my Daddy, your great-grandfather would help get people out. He'd have to hide them in the back of the truck…put them under a body or something to help get them out of town before they be lynched."

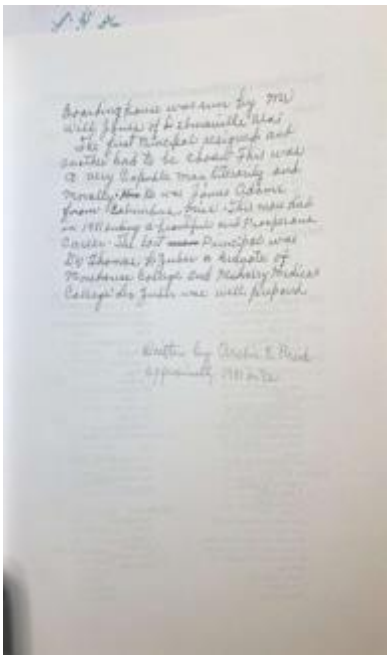
[156] William Petty, *From Yorkville to Macedonia: The Making of a Township, 1821-1993.*, 1993, 16.

historical records indicate Black schools began in Pickens in the 1890's and that Blacks used local churches and "[t]he bottom floor of Old Masonic Hall'" to provide schooling.[157] In her book, "Keeping the Spirit Alive: Pickens County Training School, Carrollton, Alabama (1915-1969), Community Historian, Ora Coleman Alston, documents one such effort by Black community leaders to build a school in Carrollton, the county seat of Pickens and the future home of Pickens County Training School.[158] Coleman cites evidence from the personal collection of Mr. Archie Brooks (her Uncle and once a leader in the Pickens Community), that

Figure 7 Letter from Mr. Archie Brooks documenting efforts to build a school in Carrollton, Alabama in 1905. Circa 1982.







[157] Petty, 17.

[158] Ora Alston Coleman, *Keeping the Spirit Alive: Pickens County Training School, Carrollton, Alabama (1915-1969)* (Baltimore, Md., United States, Baltimore, Md.: Alston Publishing, 2008).

efforts to build schools were underway before Rosenwald Schools landed in Pickens County (See figure 7).[159] The letter, written by Mr. Archie Brooks, in part reads:

> In 1905 The Lebanon Baptist Association led by dedicated ministers decided to have a school that would provide an opportunity for children of Pickens County could get more education than was possible in the two or three months in the communities. This was a tremendous task for men who had no understanding in such matters. However, these were men inspired by God and had faith to believe that with God all things are possible. In this association there were 3 *[sic]* organizations, the Sunday School Convention, The Women's Convention and Association. They raised money to hire 4 *[sic]* teachers with what money they could get from the county. ~~They did this~~ *[sic]* How much money they got I do not know. They had no building. So, Pine Grove Baptist Church was used.[160] The building was insufficient, but enthusiasm and pride overruled any shortcomings. The first year was successful. They had for principal a man who had attended Selma University, T. B. Smith. After coming to the County and looking the situation over, he saw he needed some extra help. He called in his brother J.H.L.

[159] Alston Coleman, 9.

[160] At the Pickens County Training School Bi-Annual Reunion, I learned each year the high school graduation was held at Pine Grove Baptist Church. My grandmother graduated from Pickens County Training School in 1943 and would have likely attended her graduation at Pine Grove. During PCTS reunion weekend I had the opportunity to attend church services at Pine Grove. This gave me a deeper sense of what children (including my grandmother) might have experienced during graduation ceremony. The church appeared to be one room that, by my estimation, could accommodate 100 people. Ms. Paulette, who also graduated from PCTS, recalled graduation was a mix of ceremony and church.

Smith, Rev. James Howard and a lady named Miss Betty Everson. I was about seven years old at that time so I could not be sure.

In his letter, Mr. Brooks indicated "the next hurdle was to get a building large enough to have ample space for the growing student body." Sustaining their momentum, Mr. Brooks recalls "by some miracle, "the community built a two-story building, secured a donated organ, and found a musician. The school attracted students from neighboring Greene and Lamar Counties. Traveling great distances to school, Mr. Brooks recalls these students needed lodging which the community provided. A community member, Mr. Brother Bibbs donated a "large frame house" that became a "boarding house" for the students traveling to school from faraway counties. While the Pickens County School Board Minutes indicates there were 65 independent schools (across 65 districts)[161] in Pickens County prior to the establishment of Rosenwald Schools in the community. Mr. Brooks' account provides a deeper window into the everyday labor and spirit the Black community mounted to establish schools for their children in Pickens. Historical accounts of Black schools often foreground the lack of resources and dilapidated structures of schools built by these rural communities throughout the South – but Mr. Brooks account foregrounds the "enthusiasm and pride [that] overruled and shortcomings" by documenting the community's work to make a way from minimal resources and difficult conditions.[162] The communities momentum to establish and run schools is evident in the aforementioned documentation in the

[161] In 1906 seems each school had its own "district." Pickens County Board of Education Minutes. "1906 - County Superintendents Ledger and Record." Accessed June 2018.

[162] Alston Coleman, *Keeping the Spirit Alive: Pickens County Training School, Carrollton, Alabama (1915-1969).*

School Board Education minutes as early as 1905 and builds until school Board minutes indicate the establishment of Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County began circa 1915, three years after the Rosenwald School fund was established, and under the leadership of Tuskegee Institute.

But not everyone stayed. Many African Americans began to flee from Pickens County as early as 1860 and 1870 census records show both whites and Blacks began leaving Pickens County at rates of 20 to 21% of the population, respectively. However, "[B]y 1960, 100 years later, the County was listed as having 12,098 whites, about 20% more than 100 years earlier, while the 1960 total of 9,784 "Negroes" was about 20% less than what the colored population had been 100 years before."

While the population of Blacks steadily decreased in Pickens, archival documents from

Figure 8 Ebony Magazine May 1982

newspapers and magazines indicate racial oppression did not; it remained alive and well in Pickens County, well into the 1980's. In fact, in 1982 Ebony Magazine did a feature story on

Pickens County entitled, "The County Where the Old South Refuses to Die."[163] The article paints a picture of a remote County, situated in the turbulent South but missed by the gains of the civil rights movement as two Black women activist received harsh jail sentences for alleged voter fraud. In protest, over 4,000 residents marched from Pickens County to Montgomery, Alabama. The article documents this incident and also describes Pickens County:

> Pickens County, Alabama is much like the typical rural counties in the Deep South. The summers are hot, the winters are mild, and the cotton grows high… buzzing chain saws and the thunder of crashing timber can be heard from Aliceville to Reform. In Carrolton, the county seat, everything is quiet until people go into "town" on Saturday. … But with all its similarities to other Southern counties, Pickens County is still somewhat different. In many ways, it seems like this county (90 miles southwest of Birmingham) has been covered by a protective bubble and thus has escaped the effects of Freedom Riders, the civil rights movement and the host of civil rights acts that followed. "It's a shame, but very little has changed in the Pickens County since 1954," says Willie Davis, president of the Pickens County Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The article, published in 1982, goes on to report that in Pickens County, Black city workers are paid less than white workers although many Black workers had just as much tenure as whites on the jobs. Furthermore, whites and Blacks were still operating under norms of racial segregation "although there [weren't] any "Colored" and "White" signs to suggest segregation, there are separate waiting rooms for Black and White patients at one White doctor's office in Carrolton."

[163] "The County Where The 'Old South' Refuses to Die," *Ebony Magazine*, May 1982.

As headway had been made throughout the South to loosen the grip of racial oppression and segregation, Pickens County was slower to release its grip on social and economic norms that left Blacks locked in economic and social oppression. As Blacks hoped to find relief and economic opportunities in the North – they left.[164] Black's exodus from Pickens County continued through 1970. Their flight paralleled that of millions of Blacks who headed North during the Great Migration.[165]

My family was among the millions. My maternal family – my mother (13 years old), her three siblings (11, 9, and 6 years old), mother and father (my grandparents) — left Pickens County by car circa 1959, late one evening, after my Grandfather, Arthur Neal, was threatened with lynching. Although my grandparents left Pickens, other Blacks, including family members, stayed. Many Blacks could not leave or chose to stay. Amid the history, racial complexities, and quest for Black education in Pickens County, I have found (as the prelude illustrates) Black children and thereby Black childhood has not been documented nor examined. Similar to the absence of access to knowledge, conversations and historical information I have had related to my own mother's elementary education in PCRS in the 1950s and my grandmother, Ollie Rose's education in the 1930s and 40s in PCRS, research has scarcely collected and examined data that would provide a window into the experiences of Black children in and around PCRS (and Rosenwald Schools more broadly) from the vantage and perspective of its children. Because of

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[164] Allan H Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (University of Chicago Press, 1967); Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (Vintage, 2011).

[165] Today, there are 20,042 people living in Pickens (54.9% White, 41.8% Black, 2.42% Hispanic) with a median age of 42.2 "Pickens County, AL," Data USA, accessed May 7, 2018, https://datausa.io/profile/geo/pickens-county-al/#intro.. The median household income in Pickens is $31,679 and the median property value is $89,000 "Pickens County, AL.".

my own subjectivity as a descendent of people from Pickens County and PCRS; my preliminary research, which has unearthed the existence of a significant amount of data (i.e., participants, material objects, and archival data); and the historical significance of Rosenwald Schools, I have chosen Pickens County as my site of research. In the following section, I provide a description of the Rosenwald Schools that once operated in Pickens, followed by a discussion of my methods of data collection.

Data Collection

This investigation draws on oral histories, material objects, archival and ethnographic data from four of six Rosenwald Schools that were in Pickens County, Alabama circa 1915 - 1973. The period of study is 1940 - 1969. Local school board minutes[166] and the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund File Database have indicated there were a total of six Rosenwald School in Pickens (See Figure 40 and Table 10). However, during my exploratory fieldwork I was only able to identify once-children who attended four of the six documented schools, which were: Mamiesville Elementary School, Pickensville Elementary School, Hopewell High School, and Pickens County Training School. Later, as I conducted more interviews and attended the PCTS class reunion (2018) I did meet one alumnus from Salem School. Due to time constraints, I did not have the opportunity to interview her, but she did take me to the old steps of Salem School – which is all that remains of the structure.

One reason for the absence of once-children from the two additional schools may be that the two schools—Elbeleville School and Salem School—may have been the oldest of the six

166 During the summer or 2015, I did a preliminary exploration of the Carrollton School Board archives which are located in Pickens County, Alabama. This board minutes document the planning and construction of the Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County.

schools, and those who may have attended, worked for, or interacted with the schools are no longer alive. Another reason I was unable to tap into a group of once-children from these two schools could be that there are no known annual reunions or web presence which would have made it easier for me to identify and connect with alumni. Finally, as many of my participants were met through snowballing, it could be that I have not yet made the acquaintance of a key informant who might have access to collectives of former students of Salem and Elbeleville. With no access to students or teachers and no local archival records beyond administrative documentation I found in local board minutes, these two schools may be very difficult to tap into or may have nearly disappeared from local memory. Therefore, the oral histories and material objects I collected were drawn from once-children and then-children who attended at least one of the four Rosenwald School's located in Pickens County.

I began my study as an exploratory study. This preliminary data was collected in Pickens County over two summers (2015 and 2016) and periodic visits during the accordant academic years (2015 thru 2016). The data included oral histories, material objects from the personal collections of once-children, and archival documents from the Carrollton School Board of Pickens County.[167] Data collected included one group interview with eight Hopewell alumni and five one-on-one oral history interviews with participants who attended Mamiesville, Hopewell, and Pickens County Training School. I transcribed two of these interviews. All other interviews in the exploratory study as well as the larger dissertation study were transcribed using Rev.com transcription service.

167 Some data was collected during the 2015 and 2016 academic year. This data included one oral-history interview with a once-child now living in Detroit, and a group interview in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, with once-children who attended Hopewell School.

I also collected additional archival data from the following institutional archives: Fisk University Special Collections, Tuskegee University Special Collections (online), and the University of Virginia Special Collections (online). Taken together, the collection of data during the exploratory study totaled a non-linear, 12-month period that spanned two years (2015 and 2016). Moving forward with the dissertation study, I pursued data collection June 2018 through December 2018.[168] The exploratory work I completed 2015 – 2016 informed my approach to data collection and the types of data I chose to amass; I periodically refer to data collection methods I used in the exploratory study as a point of departure to describe how my initial inquiry informed the methods I used for the larger study. Going forward, any discussion of data collected reflects all data collected between 2015 and 2018.

I interviewed forty-nine once-children[169] who attended PCRS between 1940-1969, many of whom still live in Pickens County. The data collected represent Black children's voices in two ways: (1) as then-children living *in-time* of the Jim Crow era which was accessed via material objects and archival data and (2) as once-children, now adults, who were prompted to access their childhoods through *memory* via oral history interviews. These two categories of data, in-

[168] I completed one interview in Detroit in December of 2019 with Mr. Roy Howard, once-child of Pickens County Training School.

[169] For the exploratory study, I interviewed a total of 13 participants which yielded 19 interviews six participants were interviewed twice. Eight participants were interviewed as a group. The group of eight participants were members of the Hopewell Alumni Association and were also committed to helping conduct oral histories with their classmates at the Hopewell Reunion. This training was to help this group prepare to interview their classmates. During the training I held introductions that morphed into a 2-hour group interview. Although I prompted participants to say their name and something brief about their childhood attending Rosenwald Schools, or the childhood artifact they were instructed to bring to the meeting. Everyone was eager to say more. What was intended to be brief introductions morphed into a full group interview. While this impromptu group interview yielded substantive data, for the larger study, I interviewed six of the eight participants again. One participant was not available to interview, and the other group member, Mr. Willie Seay, passed away suddenly later that year.

time and memory allowed me to explore the children's voices more deeply. In-time data include material objects that I collected from (1) eight institutional archives (i.e., reports, meeting minutes, newspapers, letters, and photographs)[170] and (2) once-children's personal collections (i.e., yearbooks, memory books, class rings, graduation ribbons, and photographs; of which one photograph collection was child authored (See Table 6). Of the 49 once-children who were interviewed, 43 are included in the study. Six participants were not included in the study because the group interview was conducted by phone and was too difficult/costly to transcribe. I have amassed 3,660 minutes (61 hours and 4 minutes) of oral-history data which is 2,100 hours of transcription data.

Table 2 Interview and Transcription Hours by Audio File

Interviewee Audio Files	***File Length in Minutes***	***Duration***	***Total Int. Duration***	***61:05:00***
Amanda McKinstry	54	0:54:00	***Total Audio Minutes***	*3660*
Anne Petty	39	0:39:00	**Total Transcription Hours**	**2,135**
Annie Pearl Gore	23	0:23:00		
Bettye Warren Windham	98	1:38:00		
Billie Randolph Kennedy	136	2:16:00		
Billy Foster	54	0:54:00		
Caroline Locke Wright	117	1:57:00		
Curly Collie	166	2:46:00		
Deloris Neal	107	1:47:00		
Doll Richardson** [and Billy Foster]	-	-		
Ethel Grice **	-	-		
Fate Jones	171	2:51:00		
GB Hinton [and Winnie Hinton]	44	0:44:00		
Geraldine Finch Brooks	46	0:46:00		
Herbert Hughes	131	2:11:00		
Hopewell Training**	185	3:05:00		

170 Fisk University Special Collections (in-person); Tuskegee University Special Collections (online); University of Virginia Special Collections (online); Rockefeller Archive Center (online); and Alabama State Agent for Negro Schools rural schools photograph collection at the Alabama Department of Archives and History (online); and Horace Mann Bond Papers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst Special Collections (Online)

Jackie Spencer Brooks [and Ora Alston]	157	2:37:00		
James Kirkland	113	1:53:00		
Janie Bell Sherrod Curry [and Ethel Grice]	45	0:45:00		
Janie Lee Currington	60	1:00:00		
Joanne Lark	5	0:05:00		
John Wilkins Jr.	147	2:27:00		
Johnny Benton	117	1:57:00		
Linda Latham Smith	57	0:57:00		
Mabel Jones	60	1:00:00		
Mary Collie	66	1:06:00		
Mary Fuseyamore	118	1:58:00		
Ms. Jackie Spencer & Ora Alton	158	2:38:00		
Neal Arthur	254	4:14:00		
Nettie Burton Dixon***	0	0:00:00		
O'Neal Lark	100	1:40:00		
Ora Alston**	-	-		
Paul Davis *	43	0:43:00		
Paulette Locke Newberns	83	1:23:00		
Roy Howard**no transcript	82	1:22:00		
The Mayor*	97	1:37:00		
Thomas Pointer	54	0:54:00		
Trudy Connor	99	1:39:00		
William Petty	141	2:21:00		
Willie E. Henley	63	1:03:00		
Willie Howard	175	2:55:00		
Willie Seay **	-	-		
Winnie Winton**	-	-		
***Hopewell Group Interview*				
**Pseudonym*				

In-time Data

To collect in-time data, I targeted national and local institutions that hold archives or records related to the Rosenwald Schools Program (RSP) nationally, within Alabama, and Pickens County. My search yielded seven archives that held data related to the RSP. The eight archives fell into four categories: Rosenwald archival collection, Rosenwald agents, Alabama specific, and Pickens County specific. Rosenwald archive categories held entire Rosenwald School collections that included the foundation's business papers (e.g., administrative papers,

reports, and other documentation). The Rosenwald agents category held papers, reports, and other documentation associated with Rosenwald agents, but the archive does not hold a larger Rosenwald collection. The Alabama specific category held data related to the history of African American education in Alabama and therein held miscellaneous documents related to the Rosenwald Program. However, the archive does not hold a larger Rosenwald collection. The Pickens County category represents archives held by local institutions (i.e., board of education and libraries) and hold miscellaneous data related to African American education in Pickens which includes sparse data related to the Rosenwald Schools program.

Within the eight archives I visited or sourced online, I specifically searched for written documents (e.g., administrative documents, letters, reports), or visual documents (e.g., photographs) that provided a window into Black school children's experiences and/or voices within the Rosenwald School program. Along these lines, I searched for sources that represented this Rosenwald data generally, in Alabama, and specifically in Pickens County. In the following section I discuss (a) why I chose these archives, (b) how I approached them, (c) whether the archive provided useful data or proved to be unproductive, and (d) a synopsis of the full data retrieved.

Description of Collections

Rosenwald Archive Collections. I chose to explore Rosenwald collections at Fisk University and Tuskegee University. I targeted these archives because both special collections libraries hold the Rosenwald Foundations (hereafter referred to as the Foundation) papers which I learned of by reading the archival references used in previous historical studies on the

Rosenwald Program.[171]. Both libraries hold the Foundation's papers because the Foundation was previously housed at and managed by both schools. As previously mentioned, the Rosenwald Program was launched in 1913 via a partnership between Booker T. Washington, President of Tuskegee University, Julius Rosenwald, CEO of Sears and Roebuck, and the rural Black community. The Rosenwald Foundation, which was started at Tuskegee University in 1917, was established to manage the Rosenwald School Program. In 1938, the Foundation and its management was moved to Fisk University. Hence, both Universities hold a portion of the Foundation's historical records.

Because of each institutions' direct connection to the Program, I was optimistic that each archive held primary data related to the operations of the Rosenwald Program. Below, I provide separate accountings for each archive which include: (a) why I targeted the archive, (b) how I approached data collection, and (c) whether my exploration yielded data pertinent to my dissertation study.

Tuskegee University Special Collections. As the original site of the Rosenwald School program and its location in Alabama, I began my review of Tuskegee University's Special Collections (TUSC). I first searched the TUSC website for finding aids[172] for the Collection. The website does not reference specific holdings related to the Rosenwald School Program. I attempted to access other finding aids that may have been related to the RSP, particularly finding

[171] James D Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1988); Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*; S Hoffschwelle Mary, "The Rosenwald Schools of the American South," *Gainesville: University Press of Florida,* 2006.

[172] A finding aid is a document that catalogs the contents of the archive. They provide an overview of an archive's holdings as well as specific information related to historic figures and topics. Finding aids are extremely useful to conduct an archival search as the document can help a research identify sources they would like to explore before conducting an archival visit.

aids related to Booker T. Washington. Unfortunately, the links to the finding aid did not work. I then contacted the special collections librarian who sent me the finding aid for the entire Special Collections. The finding aid listed one box named "Julius Rosenwald" however, there is no finding aid associated with the box. I contacted the librarian to inquire about the box and whether its contents included information about Rosenwald Schools generally, in Alabama, and Pickens County. The librarian informed me that most documentation related to the Rosenwald Schools would likely be in the "Clinton Calloway" papers. I was told includes approximately 30 boxes of documents. However, I was also told there was no finding aid associated with the Calloway Papers.

In lieu of a finding aid, the librarian provided me with a PowerPoint that provided background information on Clinton Calloway. From the PowerPoint I gleaned that Clinton Calloway led Tuskegee's Extension program at least between 1902 – 1935. During that time, Calloway was "largely responsible for the organization and upbuilding of the rural schools [throughout] Macon and other counties in Alabama." The PowerPoint also provided a small sampling of what the Calloway Papers might include (i.e., photos of schoolhouses, pamphlets from grassroots fundraising efforts, record keeping documents, handwritten maps of the original Rosenwald School locations in Macon, AL., and program brochures) however, all documentation therein represented historical information prior to 1938 which is outside my period of study (i.e., 1940 – 1969).

While the Clinton Calloway PowerPoint captured my interest, it did not provide a means by which I could review holdings and identify sources that might prove relevant to my topic. Furthermore, with no finding aid, I could not request specific documents be prepped ahead for my visit. I determined it would have taken multiple visits to Tuskegee to (a) determine what was

in the Collection and (b) determine if any of the information was relevant to my topic. Also, given the Foundation moved to Fisk in 1938 there was a high probability that the collections holdings would have been prior to 1938 and hence, outside of my period of study. Given these factors, and my limited resources for multiple visits to any one archive, I decided not to privilege Tuskegee visit.

One caveat is that I was able to take my study narrators on a field trip to Tuskegee in the fall of 2018.[173] This visit only confirmed my initial hunch that without a finding aid, a search of the collection would have required a great deal of time and multiple visits. In the future, when I have more time and resources, I hope to explore the Calloway Collection as it might yield pertinent information specifically related to the Rosenwald Program in Alabama and Pickens County.

Fisk Special Collections. Next, I turned my attention to the Rosenwald archive located at Fisk University. This resulted in two visits to the archive. In total, I spent seven days exploring

[173] On November 27, 2018, a group of my narrators and I visited Tuskegee University's Special Collections and Shiloh Rosenwald School. This was a learning tour associated with our development of a local archive associated with our museum project. Our goal was to (a) tour the Tuskegee Archive and spend time reviewing documents, and (b) to tour Shiloh Rosenwald School (which is an established museum) and speak with the Shiloh's board members and directors about their work. While we were able to tour Tuskegee's Special Collections and review a very small selection of documents – our time at Tuskegee served to introduce the group to the archive, the process of managing an archive, and the function of an archive in the process collecting documents and materials and conducting archival research. Unfortunately, we ran out of time and could not do the deeper exploration I had hoped to do. Hence, I didn't get an opportunity to access the Clinton Calloway papers that were brought to my attention two years prior to our visit. Given my examination of Fisk archives, I found there is a considerable absence of data associated with Rosenwald Schools in Alabama. I had hoped to find some of this information in the Tuskegee archives. I will have to return later to pursue this line of data collection. Visiting the archive, I did access that several visits would be required to really get a sense of what the Collection might include related to the RSP in Alabama. Nevertheless, I wanted to document that my narrators and I *did* visit the archive.

the archive. The first visit (July 23, 2015) was for two days, and the second visit (December 3, 2018) was for five days.

First, I searched the FSCL's website for finding aids related to the Rosenwald Program. Once I found the finding aids, I combed through the documents in search of information related to the Rosenwald School Program. I identified and reviewed boxes within the collection that I thought might hold sources that document or illustrate the experiences and/or voices of children who attended Rosenwald Schools (and particularly in Alabama). While I had also hoped to find information between 1940 and 1969, I remained open to collecting data that fell outside of these years given I wasn't sure how much data would be available. I created a form to log documents I would later request from the librarian (See Table 3). I then contacted the archive and requested boxes across themes that included: administration, Projects/persons requesting aid (which included book orders for school libraries), Rural School Program Photographs, and Sub -series boxes (which included clippings, photos, drawings, and blue prints). Upon my visits to the archive, I expanded the form to included columns to confirm pulled documents and to keep track of documents I reviewed (i.e., "Status"). I also used the form to log notes related to each relevant document (i.e., "Notes") (See Table 4).

Table 3 Illustration of Documents Request for In-person Archival Visit at Fisk University Special Collections

Julius Rosenwald (1917-1948)		
Section	**Box#**	**Contents**
Administration	77	Schools minutes (f. 4-13) 1928-1936, Also Race Relations programs, Rural Schools Supervisors, State Agents Lists 1943-45Jeanes Teachers 1942-45 (f. 1-4)
Projects/Persons Requesting Aid	157	Alabama, State of 1930, 1936-40 (f. 3-7), American Church Institute for Negroes 1935,37 (f. 13), Also American Council on Ed (f. 16-19). and American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom (f. 14)
Projects/Persons Requesting Aid	323	Rural School Program (RSP) MATERIALS FOR INTSTRUCTION (F. 9!) (1937), RSP survey of Normal Schools (1937-38,39-40) Misc., (f. 5, 7-11)
Photographs	558	Rural School Program (RSP) 1922-1923 (f. 1, AL)

Photographs	559	Misc. Photos (should they become available)
Photographs	560	Misc. Photos (should they become available)
Photographs	558	Rural School Program (RSP) 1922-1923 (f. 1, AL)
Julius Rosenwald Supplement		
Sub-Series 2- Articles	19 (18-4)	18-4 – Sub-series 3- Book Reviews, "Building a Rural Civilization" Guide says there are clippings and photos in here.
Series 5- Julius Rosenwald Supplement No. 2 Collected Materials Sub-Series 9	19 – 19B	19 – 50 items, Drawings, blue prints, maps etc. 19B - Extra-large box (19-10, 19-11, 19-24,

Table 4 Illustration of Documentation of Reviewed Requested Archival Files

Julius Rosenwald (1917-1948)				
Status	**Section**	**Box #**	**Contents**	Notes
Reviewed	Projects/Persons Requesting Aid	280	Elem Lib. Publisher payments 1930-31, High School Lib. $120 set- AL, 1930-33	Long lists of book orders for the county high schools. No Pickens County and I didn't see Alabama. I made copies of one list from another place (Georgia)
Missing	Photographs	559	Misc. Photos (should they become available)	Not available.

For the second visit, my primary goal was to explore photographs that were not available during my first visit. Before this visit, I returned to the finding aid, reviewed the finding aid alongside the information and associated notes I logged during my first visit to the Archive. This process helped me to identify files I had not explored and to avoid requesting files I had previously reviewed and copied.

On both visits, I kept daily detailed notes regarding what I found in each folder and whether the contents seemed relative to my project. For relevant data, I tracked the citation information associated with each item (i.e., box number, folder number, and number of pages). I used this information to request photocopies of data. Later, I would use my notes and logs to cite primary sources.

My visits to the Fisk Rosenwald Collection yielded data that spanned 1912 – 1945. Most data reflected years prior to 1940. I reviewed 175 documents (e.g., reports, studies,

correspondence) and 109 photographs (e.g., school buildings, teachers, and children). Data included mostly reports and photographs. Reports were typically authored by "field agents" who were responsible for monitoring the development of new Rosenwald school buildings as well as the progress of buildings. Unfortunately, most photographs are not dated. I could only speculate by the aesthetics of the photographs that they may have been taken between the 1920s and 1940s.

Most photographs I accessed in the collection depicted school buildings, however I found a small set of 20 photographs (1937), authored by a Jeanes Teacher, that depict children in and around Rosenwald Schools (e.g., playground, stairways, and other non-descript outdoor areas) and each photograph includes a descriptive caption.[174]

Twenty-one documents and Fifty-Four photographs were sources within the study period (i.e., 1940-1945). These documents and photographs provided context for the experiences and perspectives of administrators, leaders, and teachers associated with the Rosenwald Program. However, there were scant documents related to or mentions of Alabama. and of the 54 photographs relevant to this study only four (undated) were related to Alabama and only one photograph depicted a child in or around Alabama Rosenwald Schools.

Although most photographs are not dated, the photographic data is pertinent to the study because the photographs provide context for how Black children were documented, and the photographs depict children engaged in school work, at play, or posed in various areas inside or adjacent to schools. The sources provided a slight window into children's experiences in and around schools. I say 'slight' because many photos seem staged as children appeared still and

[174] Inc Anna T. Jeanes Foundation - Negro Rural School Fund, “Anna T. Jeanes Foundation Photograph Album, 1915.,” 1915.

emotionless or robotic in images. It is likely that these photographs were taken by adults, Rosenwald field agents (or in one case a Jeanes Teacher) who took photographs for their reports to the Rosenwald Foundation.

Searching Collections

Rosenwald Agent Collections. I reviewed archives that held documents and photographs created by Rosenwald Agents. Rosenwald agents were hired to oversee some aspect of the Rosenwald Buildings Program. They would travel to regional locations, observe the construction of schoolhouses as well as the school's progression once in operation. Rosenwald agents would then send reports back to the Rosenwald administrative offices through writing and photos. Although the Rosenwald Program was originally administered through Tuskegee Institute (1913-1920) and then moved to Fisk University in 1920, I have found these reports are scattered across various archives including the Rockefeller Archives, Jackson Davis Collection at the University of Virginia Special Collections, and the Horace Mann Bond Collection at the University of Massachusetts Special Collections.

I also targeted these collections because provided digital access (in part) to Agent reports and/or photographs. I thought I might find reports and photographs associated with the Rosenwald Agents who were assigned to Pickens County. I approached these archives by searching the online photo collection associated with the Rosenwald Schools. Search terms included: the name of a particular Rosenwald agent (e.g., Jackson Davis), African American Education, Rosenwald Schools, Alabama and Pickens County, Alabama. Table (5) shows the results of this search. The Rockefeller search yielded 126 documents which included 11 relevant documents (which mentioned Pickens County) and 68 photographs of which 14 (related to

Alabama Rosenwald Schools, but not Pickens County) were relevant to this study.[175] The relevant documents and photographs provided useful data for contextualizing the Rosenwald Program in Alabama and with some specificity, Pickens County. However, all data was outside of my period of study.

Alabama Specific Collections. I targeted Alabama specific collections as I sought to find more archival information on Rosenwald Schools in Alabama and possibly Pickens County. The Alabama Department of Archives and History holds a Photographs and Pictures Collection of Black life in Alabama. Within this collection there are sub-collections associate with African American children and education. I approached the archive by searching general terms within the only digitized photo collection. The search terms included: African American (or Black, Negro, Colored) Education, Rosenwald Schools, Alabama, and Pickens County.

The search yielded four photographs, of which two photographs were relevant to this study. The two photographs depict the Pickens County Training School (1916) and Black girls taking a home economics course inside the school (1916). Unfortunately, these photographs are also outside of the period of study however they provided excellent and place specific context for the presence of Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County.

Pickens County Specific Collections [Libraries, Board Minutes]. I targeted Pickens County specific collections to try to get information confirming the establishment of Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County as well as any pertinent information I could find related to Black children's experiences in or around the schools. Through snowballing methods in the community

[175] Relevancy to the study indicates the archival documents were related to Rosenwald Schools in Alabama, however as the table indicates, all the photographs were outside of the period of study. Nevertheless, the photos did provide context related to the history of Rosenwald Schools in Alabama.

(i.e., talking with various community members about my project and getting their advice on where to find historical documents/information) I was led to three main sources: Reform Library, Aliceville Library, and the Pickens County Board of Education School Board minutes. I was told the libraries have local yearbooks and that if the Rosenwald Schools had yearbooks, I might find them in these spaces. With regard to the School Board Minutes, through my history methods courses, I knew I might find records that reflect administrative business of the Board which might include the establishment of the Rosenwald Schools and business related to those schools.

I approached each of these archives by conducting in-person visits. At the libraries, I spoke with the librarian on site. In each case I was led to a 'genealogy' room that held local school yearbooks. Both sites did not yield any information to the history of Black schools in the area. Both sites held an extensive collection of yearbooks related to the white schools in the area. This was outside of the scope of my project, so I didn't pursue this, but I did make note that many of these books dated back to the 1930s. For me, this was just another instance of local erasure of the stories and experiences of Black children in public spaces. I left wondering why local Black schools were not there. Did Black schools have yearbooks and other documentation? If so, were they excluded from these spaces? While I didn't retrieve any pertinent data – what I *didn't* retrieve in relation to what was there was a pertinent experience.

Personal Collections. Lastly, I also explored the personal collections of my narrators. I targeted personal collections because I thought my participants might hold documents and artifacts related to their childhoods and these primary sources might not be in institutional archives. Also, I had hoped to gain deeper access to these items as I could directly ask narrators about the sources. This is something institutional archives don't necessarily provide; documents and materials are often no longer associated with their original author or owner.

I collected data from personal collections through interviews and snowballing. In other words – every primary source I collected was not always linked to an interview. Some people provided sources but didn't want to be interviewed or passed away before I could interview them. In preparation for interviews, I asked each participant to bring any artifacts they may own (e.g., photographs) or documents (e.g., yearbooks, memory books) to their interview. I also let narrators know, if they agreed, we would discuss these items in the interview. Through this process I was able to collect 349 documents and 291 photographs, all of which were pertinent to this study. Documents include childhood photographs, child authored photographs, four memory books, two yearbooks (one child authored), and a school gradebook.

Results of Archival Collection Search

In this section I discuss the results of my data collection in both institutional and personal collections. Tables 5 and 6 provide visual presentations of the data I collected, which data I found useful, and for what purposes.

Table 5 Institutional Archival Data Collection Overview

Category	Archive	Collection	Years	Description of Documents	Total Documents	Relevant Documents	Total Photographs	Relevant Photographs	Description of Photo Relevance	Description of Document Relevance
Rosenwald Archives										
	Fisk Special Collections	Julius Rosenwald Collection	1917-1948	Collection includes Rosenwald Fund administrative files (i.e.,	175	21	109	54	[+] Photographs include children posed in front of	[+] Reports within period of study (1941-1945); Documents discuss reform of rural elementary school programs.
	Tuskegee Special Collections	Clinton Calloway Papers	pre-1938	n/a	0	0	0	0	[-] Unable to access this source due to no finding aid and	n/a
Rosenwald Agent Archives										
	Rockefeller Archives	General Board of Education Collection	1910-1920	- Collection includes Rosenwald Fund state agents reports (i.e.,	126	11	68	14	[+] 68 are photographs related to Rosenwald	[+] Eleven (11) documents mention Pickens County schools in Carrolton and Reform
	University of Virginia Special Collections		1916	- Collection includes 6,000 photographs authored by Jackson Davis who was a	0	0	204	5	[+] There are five photographs of Rosenwald School	n/a
	University of Massechusetts Special Collections	Horace Mann Bond Papers, 1830-1979 (bulk 1926-1972) Rosenwald Fund	1929-1931	- Collection includes over 5,000 photographs authored by African American	0	0	163	3	[+] Photos related to Rosenwald School Program	n/a
Alabama Specific Collections										
	Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH)	Alabama Photographs and Pictures Collection		- The ADAH Digital Online Collection holds images related to people, places,	0	0	4	2	[+] Photographs depict children, in relation to Black	n/a
Pickens County Specific Collections										
	Local Libraries	Geneology Rooms	1930s - present	Local Yearbooks	0	0	0	0	[-]I found no photo collections related to Black education	[-] There were no yearbooks or other primary documents related to Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County [-] There was no documents related to Black education in
	Pickens County Board of Education				987	23	0	0	[-] I found no photographs in the Board Minutes or	[-] Much of the early records were handwritten and very difficult to read. Due to time constraints and resources (poor scanning equipment (i.e., cell phone) I was able to photograph
				Total Archival Documents and Photos	***1288***		***548***			
				Total Relevant Archival Documents and Photos		***55***		***78***		

Table 6 Personal Collections - Data Collection Overview

Category	Archive	Collection	Years	Description of Documents	Total Documents	Relevant Documents	Total Photographs	Relevant Photographs	Description of Photo Relevance	Description of Document Relevance	Usefulness
Personal Collections											
	Personal Archive	William Gore Collection	1950s - 1960s	Child authored photographs	0	0	216	216	[+] Photographs were child authored [+] Photographs were taken during the period of study [-] Mr. Gore shared the photographs with me during a random snowballing encounter. Given the time limitations, I had planned to return to Alabama to interview Mr. Gore but he passed away three months after our exchange and I didn't have an opportunity to interview him.	[+] Mr. Gore's photograph collection depicts children (approximately K - 12) playfully engaged in the process of creating photographs of themselves. [+] The collection includes children engaged in play and posing. Photographs illustrate children's experiences and voices through their visual depictions of themselves as imagined by them. [+] Also, the collection illustrates Gore's creative eyes, and provides a window into his agency to document his childhood social world as it was unfolding in time. *Mr. William Gore was a once-child of Mamiesville and Hopewell School. He took up photography begining in childhood and continued throughout his life. This collection of photographs were authored by William Gore when he was a child (I estimate he was a teen, between 13 and 16 years of age).*	Context Illustration Triangulation Child experience & agency
	Hopewell School Archive	Hopewell Alumni Board Collection Betty Windham Warren Collection	1951	Yearbook	50	50			[-] The 1951 Hopewell Annual is not student authored [+] The 1951 Annual includes student and teacher photographs that illuminate	[+] The 1951 Hopewell Annual is a student authored primary source, within the period of study [+] Source illustrates youth's activities, agency and sense of challenges and determination as documented by adults (teachers).	Context Illustration Triangulation Child experience & agency
	Hopewell School Archive	Hopewell Alumni Board Collection Geraldine Finch Brooks Collection Herbert Hughes Collection Betty Windham Warren Collection Thomas "Slay" Pointer Collection	1963	Yearbook	80	80			[+] The 1963 Hopewell Annual is a student authored primary source, within the period of study [+] The source includes student and teacher photographs that illuminate children's experiences and voices in and around school	[+] The 1963 Hopewell Annual is a student authored primary source, within the period of study [+] Source illustrates youth's activities, agency and sense of challenges and determination as documented by teachers and the children themselves.	Context Illustration Triangulation Child experience & agency
	Personal Archive	Willie Howard Collection	1960s	Memory Book	43				[+] The memory book includes keepsakes, photographs, personal reflections, and notes from friends	[+] Memory book includes some school days photos traded with friends	Context Illustration Triangulation Child experience & agency

Table 5 Personal Collections Data Collection Overview (Contd.)

Categ	Archive	Collection	Years	Description of	Total	Relevan	Total	Relevant	Description of Photo	Description of Document Relevance	Usefulness
	Personal Archive	Henrietta Wilkinson Collection	1925 - 1969	PCTS Gradebook	186	186	n/a	n/a	n/a	[+] PCTS Gradebook - shows increase of children attendance and graduation overtime; types of courses offered and changes in course type over time; children's grades and demographic information. [+] This allows for an understanding of the schools academic offerings before and during the period of study (1925-1969).	Context Illustration Triangulation Child experience & agency
	Personal Archive	Participant Personal Collections	1940-1960s	School Days Photographs			75	75	[+] School days photographs of children 1940s-1960s; privides visual in-time data		Context Illustration Triangulation Child experience & agency
	Personal Archive	Participants Personal Collections	1940-1960s	Childhood Photographs					[+] School days photographs of children 1940s-1960s; privides visual in-time data		Context Illustration Triangulation Child experience & agency
	Personal Archive	Self Published Books	1	Historical Books	3	3				[+] Provides historical data related to the local Black community and also the development of Rosenwald Schools in the area.	
	Personal Archive/Field Archive **Field Archive includes artifacts that remain in the field (i.e., childhood home, schoolhouse) that I have photographed.*	Pickens County Community	1940-1960s	Miscellaneous Artifacts (e.g., diplomas, typewritter, books, assignments (3), historic sites (i.e., childhood homes, churches, schoolhouse, books))	30	30			[+] Provides in-time contextual data	[+] Provides in-time contextual data	Context Illustration Triangulation Child experience & agency
	Total Archival Documents and Photographs from Personal Collections				***392***		***291***				
	Relevant Archival Documents and Photographs from Personal Collections					***349***		***291***			

Institutional Archives. As a collection, the various archives (i.e., collections the Rosenwald Archives, Rosenwald Agent Archives, and Alabama Specific Archives) provided vital contextual information that affirmed the existence of the six Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County, Alabama (beginning in 1916), the Black community's support in creating the schools, and a slight window into the activities therein (i.e., teachers, and girls home economics courses). For example, this set of archives provided written documentation related to the construction of the schools prior to 1938 (e.g., years of construction, community contributions and Rosenwald financial supports). Photographs (also prior to 1938) provided visual documentation of the conditions of Rosenwald schools more generally (e.g., the playgrounds, school structure, and amenities (e.g., waterwalls, outside toilets, benches and desks, chalkboards, etc.) and also children's schooling activities (e.g., homemakers clubs, hygiene lessons, reading, home economics, vocational lessons, and playground activity).

While most of the documents and photographs across these collections fall outside of my period of study, a select set of photographs from the Fisk University Special Collections may have fallen within my period of study. These photographs depict Black children's activities in and around various Rosenwald Schools. These photographs were not related to Alabama but when compared with photographs captured in the early 1900s provided a window into the possible evolution of Rosenwald Schools academic and recreational programs over time. For example, a photograph dated 1916 (Figure 10) depicts Black girls at Pickens County Training

Figure 9 Fisk Special Collections Library. Chattanooga, Tennessee. Circa 1933.

Figure 10 Davis, Jackson. Pickens County Training School Cooking Class. 1916.

School being trained to make and sell canned preserves. [176] Photographs like these illustrate Black children having been imagined as laborers and in preparation for adult labor. The photographs also exude labor as the children's expressions are often flat and disinterested. The first photograph (Figure 9) depicts Black children involved in an activity that appeared to have supported their playfulness as children. Visually, while the girls in Figure 10 are pictured in maid uniforms and evidences a constrained, lowered, and solemn presence that was more akin to dispositions associated with oppressed adults, the girls in Figure 9 were wearing

Figure 11 "Pupils use the chairs, table and book shelves made to set up library cover." Fisk University Special Collections. Date Unknown.

[176] Jackson Davis 1882-1947, *Pickens County Training School Cooking Class*, 1916, 1916, http://search.lib.virginia.edu/catalog/uva-lib:330122.

performance uniforms that embody their youthfulness and appetite for fun and celebration. [177] There are also smiles or expressions of glee on their faces. Figure 11 combines themes of labor and child activities. [178] The girls in the photograph are reading as we would expect of schoolchildren. However, they are also sitting at a table and chairs made by children. The act of making chairs and a table are laborious tasks that would normally be associated with adulthood.

Taken together, these photographs have helped to provide valuable context related to Rosenwald school children's schooling experiences and how those experiences may have evolved over time prior to my period of study. This would confirm that Black children were imagined as laborers but increasingly school may have become a space where they articulated their childhood status. However, the vocational focus never completely disappeared in the photographs or Rosenwald agent reports.

While the aforementioned archives provided general contextual data that helped me understand the history of Rosenwald schools and provided illustrations of children's schooling experiences prior to 1940, Pickens County Board of Education Board Minutes provided some specific information related to the development of Pickens County Rosenwald Schools, and teachers' salaries. This information was consistent with previous research on Rosenwald Schools.[179] For example, I learned Black families donated their land to erect two of the

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[177] *Rosenwald School - Four Girls, Dancing Activity*, 1933, 1933, box 558, folder 3, Fisk University, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Special Collections.

[178] *Pupils Use the Chairs, Table and Book Shelves Made to Set up Library Cover.*, Unknown, Unknown, box 558, folder 3, Fisk University, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Special Collections.

[179] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 1988; Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1996).

Rosenwald Schools in the community (i.e., Mamiesville School, and Pickensville School).[180] Furthermore, accounting records show teachers received less pay than their white counterparts.

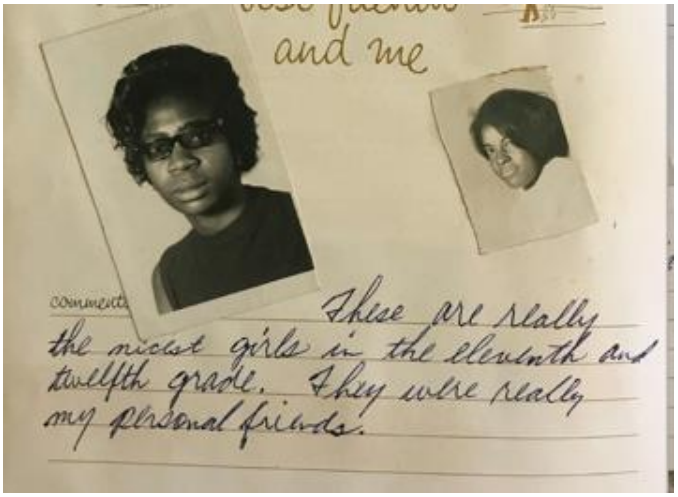
Challenges reviewing the Board Minutes included they were difficult to read because they were handwritten through the 1930s. Also, I had no access to a photocopier at the Board of Education and with limited time, it was impossible for me to scan all the books that covered my period of study (each book was approximately 300 pages). Given these challenges, I tried to skim the books as best I could during my two visits to the Board of Education. Reading through the books allowed me to confirm the inequities the schools were experiencing as well as the self-determination that drove Black community members work to establish six Rosenwald schoolhouses. Furthermore, the books provided a brief window into the everyday nuances of racial segregation. For example, everything in the books were written separately by race (i.e., Black, and white teacher were listed on separate pages) and the disregard of Black children in the minutes as I noticed the names of white high school graduates were listed in the Board minutes, Black graduates were not. While the Board Minutes have the potential to be a huge resource for my work, time and copying resources were a constraint in terms of having not had the opportunity to deeply review the documents. Nevertheless, I was able to resource valuable information that validated the Pickens community as a Rosenwald community and the context of the schools. Local libraries yielded no helpful information, although the absence of data was historically relevant as it spoke to the silencing and erasure of this powerful story of African American education in the public life of the community.

[180] There may have been additional evidence to support that additional schools were supported by land donations from Black families however, I have not yet found information related to the land ownership.

Personal Archives. Finally, narrator's personal collections of were very helpful in the study. The personal collections yielded artifacts depicting Black childhood or authored by Black children. For example, one narrator shared his childhood photo collection which he authored as a middle school and high school student. This collection was extremely valuable as it added a visual window into children's lives in and around school as captured by them. These photographs illustrated childish agencies – camaraderie, play, playfulness, courting – as well as children's agency to curate themselves through their own eyes (See Figure 12). Additional sources provided a window into once-children's written words which helped to validate how children might have been thinking about

Figure 12 Children on Mamiesville playground curate themselves. Circa 1950s. William Gore Collection.

Figure 13 Willie Howard's memory book. As a senior in high school, he documents friends. 1965. Willie Howard Collection.



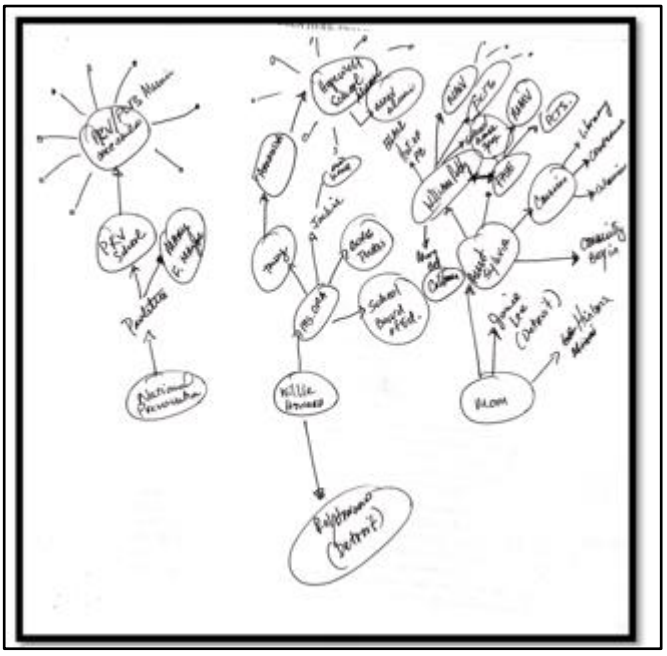
themselves, their friends ships and experiences (See Figure 13). Taken together, the data was used to triangulate and support or refute various themes that emerged from my analysis of oral history interviews.

In the following section, I discuss how I collected oral history interview data and the use of objects (when available) within the context of the interviews. Later, in the data analysis section, I describe how I analyzed these materials apart from the interviews.

Memory Data: Oral History Interviews

I identified participants through a snowballing process [181] that was seeded through a network of Rosenwald School alumni that was seeded through two initial sources: my mother and the internet. I initially began searching for participants who attended Mamiesville School through my mother. She connected me to alumni who were extended family members, and her school classmates. While I made contacts through my mother, I also searched the internet and found websites for alumni associations for Pickens County Training School and Hopewell High School. I contacted the associations, introduced myself as a descendant of Ollie Rose Neal (my grandmother) who was doing research on the Rosenwald Schools of Pickens County. In both cases, the alumni

Figure 14 Map of Snowballing Web



[181] Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2010).

remembered my grandmother and were happy to help. These initial contacts, Amanda McKinstry (Hopewell alumnus) and Willie Howard (Pickens County Training School alumnus) helped me to snowball within networks of alumni. For example, Willie Howard introduced me to Ms. Ora Alston (Pickens County Training School) who agreed to meet me in Alabama to familiarize me with various alumni and to show me the several local institutions that held information that could benefit my study (i.e., Board of Education Board Minutes). Ms. Amanda introduced me to the Hopewell Alumni Board and invited me to be the keynote speaker at two Hopewell Alumni Reunions. These opportunities helped me to gain access to the community more broadly, introduce myself, and to intimately explain my study and my intentions as a historian and a descendant of the community.

Finally, in a third instance, I snowballed through an institutional connection. I reached out to the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) to see if they had information related to the Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County. At the time, they were running a national campaign for Rosenwald Schools and hosting a national conference. The representative at NTHP connected me with Ms. Paulette Locke (a third key informant) who was an alumnus of Pickensville Elementary and was also working (with her sisters Mary and Caroline) to restore the Pickensville Rosenwald Schoolhouse. I initially met Ms. Paulette through a phone call. Following a few conversations, we decided to meet at the Pickensville Schoolhouse in Alabama, and then together drove nine hours to the NTHP Rosenwald Conference in North Carolina. On that drive our worlds cemented, and we began working together. Ms. Paulette helped me to connect with more participants, and we also began a partnership to add a museum to the

Pickensville restoration project. Figure 14 provides a visual mapping of the snowballing web described above.[182]

Participants

Most once-children in the study were African American men and women between the ages of 60-93years of age. Given this population of once-children were in their winter years, no once-children who were interested in interviewing were turned away. However, all once-children must have attended at least one of the four Rosenwald Schools to be included in the study. Of the four Rosenwald Schools included in the study – two were elementary schools (i.e., Mamiesville and Pickensville offered 1st through 8th grade), and the remaining two schools were 1st- 12th grade (i.e., Pickens County Training School and Hopewell School). Hence, interviews spanned elementary and high school experiences.

The participants represent a balanced grouping across schools, gender, and age. Table 8 illustrates participants by school and gender. Within the group of once-child participants, 20 are male and 23 are female. For elementary school, thirteen (13) participants attended Mamiesville, nine participants attended Pickensville School and four participants attended Pickens County Training School. Most participants attended Hopewell School for both elementary (17) and High School (23). Two students left Pickens county following elementary school and attended high school in Chicago (indicated by left "LFT" in the tables). Four students started high school following the enforcement of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in Pickens. These four

youngsters were among the first to attend desegregated high schools (Pickens County High School, Aliceville High School, and Kirksey High).[183]

Gender representation was equally distributed across schools, except for Pickensville Elementary which had more female representation. Most participants were born in the 1940s (26) or 1950s (9) and were between 70 and 60 years of age at the time of the oral history interviews. All participants were born in Pickens County, Alabama. Most of their parents were sharecroppers or farmers. A very few (seven) participant's parents held positions beyond the farm (e.g., carpenter, midwife, school teacher, principal, store owner, moonshiner). Table 7 illustrates the pool of participants in the study individually by school, gender, age, and cohort years[184] for elementary and high school.

Table 7 Participants by School, Gender, and Birth Year

School	**Abbreviation**	**By Elem School**	**By High School**	**Male n=20**	**Female n=23**
Mamiesville Elementary	MVL	13	-	6	7
Pickensville Elementary	PVL	9	-	3	6
Hopewell Elementary	HWL	17	23	9	8
Pickens Country Training School Elementary	PCTS	4	17	2	2
Hopewell High School	-	-	-	12	11
Pickens Country Training School High School	-	-	-	7	10
* *Integrated high schools*	PCH / ALC/ Kirksey	-	4	3	1
**Left Alabama*	LFT		2	1	1
	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	
Year of Birth	2	7	23	11	
Age *(at the time of interview)*	90s	80s	70s	60s	

[183] These three schools are not Rosenwald Schools. Pickens County desegregated schools in 1969. At this time, Rosenwald Schools in Pickens began to close and Black children were transferred to white schools. By 1973, all Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County were closed.

[184] "Cohort year" does not reflect graduation rates.

Table 8 Narrator Demographics by Age, and School, Sorted by Birth Year

Interviewee	M	F	Born	Elementary Attended	High School	Elementary (Cohort Years)	High School (Cohort Years)
Mabel Jones		1	1923	MVL	PCTS	1929-1936	1940
Roy Howard	1		1929	PVL	PCTS	1934-1942	1946
Trudy Spruill Connor		1	1931	PCTS	PCTS	1937-1944	1948
John Wilkins Jr.	1		1932	PVL	PCTS	1938-1946	1950
GB Hinton	1		1935	MVL	HWL	1941-1948	1952
Anne Petty		1	1936	PVL	PCTS	1942-1949	1953
Mary Collie		1	1938	PVL	PCTS	1944-1951	1955
Mary Locke Fuseyamore		1	1938	PVL	PCTS	1944-1951	1955
Herbert Hughes	1		1939	HWL	HWL	1945-1952	1956
Winnie Hinton		1	1940	MVL	HWL	1946-1953	1957
Betty Warren Windham		1	1941	HWL	HWL	1947-1954	1958
William Gore	1		1941	MVL	HWL	1947-1954	1958
Annie Pearl Gore		1	1942	MVL	HWL?	1948-1955	1959
Willie E. Henley	1		1943	HWL	HWL	1949-1956	1960
Carolene Locke Wright		1	1944	PVL	PCTS	1950-1957	1961
Janie Sherrod Curry			1944	PVL	PCTS	1950-1957	1961
Thomas Pointer	1		1944	HWL	HWL	1950-1957	1961
Paul Davis[185]	1		1945	HWL	HWL	1951-1957	1961
Janie Lee Currington		1	1946	MVL	HWL	1952-1958	1962
James Kirkland	1		1946	PVL	PCTS	1952-1960	1964
Paulette Locke Newberns		1	1946	PVL	PCTS	1952-1960	1964
Deloris Neal Ransom +		1	1947	MVL	LFT	1953-1959	1963
Joseph Dantzler +	1		1947	HWL	HWL	1953-1959	1963
O'Neal Lark	1		1947	HWL	HWL	1953-1959	1963
Willie Seay	1		1947	HWL	HWL	1952-1959	1963
Arthur Neal Jr. +	1		1948	MVL	LFT	1954-1960	1964

[185] Pseudonym.

Billie Randolph Kennedy +		1	1948	HWL	HWL	1954-1960	1964
Billy Foster	1		1948	MVL	HWL	1954-1960	1964
Ethel Grice		1	1948	PVL	Kirksey	1954-1960	1964
Geraldine Finch Brooks		1	1948	MVL/HWL	HWL	1954-1960	1964
Willie Howard	1		1949	PCTS	PCTS	1955-1961	1965
Jackie Brooks Spencer		1	1949	PCTS	PCTS	1955-1962	1966
The Mayor[186]+	1		1950	HWL	HWL	1956-1962	1966
Doll Richardson		1	1951	HWL	HWL	1957-1964	1968
Johnny Benton	1		1951	HWL	HWL	1957-1964	1968
Amanda McKinstry +		1	1951	HWL	HWL	1957-1964	1968
Linda Latham		1	1951	HWL	HWL	1957-1964	1968
Joanne Lark		1	1951	HWL	HWL	1957-1964	1968
Ora Alston		-	1951	MVL	PCTS	1957-1964	1968
Curly Collie	1		1952	PVL	PCTS/ALC*	1958-1966	1970
Fate Jones Interview	1		1952	MVL	PCTS/PCH*	1958-1966	1970
William Petty +	1		1952	MVL	PCTS/PCH*	1958-1966	1970
Nettie Burton Dixon		1	1953	HWL	HWL	1959-1965	1969
Key							
Mamiesville		MVL					
Pickensville		PVL					
Hopewell		HWL					
Pickens Country Training School		PCTS					
** Integrated high schools* *+Parents were not farmers or sharecroppers*							

[186] "The Mayor" is a pseudonym. At the time of his interview, the participant was the mayor of one of the local towns. He did not want to be mentioned in the study by name. He chose this pseudonym.

Location. Most interviews took place in Pickens County, Alabama, in the homes of once-children, local community spaces (i.e., libraries) or outside the Pickensville Elementary Rosenwald School building (i.e., in a rented Mobile Mini unit).[187] All interviews were recorded with a handheld voice recorder; I ensured each once-child was comfortable with my use of the recorder by explaining its use and I informed each participant they would receive a copy of their interview upon completion of the study.[188]

Each interview lasted for 1 ½ to 2 hours. During interviews, I employed an oral history approach. I used open ended questions using "simple," "familiar," accessible language, and rarely interrupted participants, [189] which created a relaxed interview environment. [190] A relaxed interview environment would promote thick-descriptions that are customarily produced in

[187] Because the school building was still under construction during interviews, Ms. Paulette didn't feel it would be safe to interview inside the schoolhouse. Furthermore, at the time, the schoolhouse was not handicap accessible and the temperature inside the building was very hot. These conditions were not conducive for most participants. Through our public scholarship funding we were able to secure an air-conditioned Mobile Mini unit on the school grounds. This served as an office site and interview space. Because the mobile unit was on the grounds, it allowed me to walk the grounds with some of the participants. Also, the mobile unit had a window so that we could look out at the schoolhouse and playground area during the interview. A select few participants who were involved with the construction project were able to walk through the schoolhouse during the interview. In varying degrees, participants were able to describe their experiences while pointing towards or standing in the spot where they had various childhood experiences.

188 I will send once-children copies of their full interview via mail along with a certificate noting their contribution to Pickens County Rosenwald School History.

[189] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford university press, 2017), 315.

[190] Cynthia Stokes Brown, *Like It Was: A Complete Guide to Writing Oral History.* (ERIC, 1988).

narrative inquiry, and aid in "[G]round[ing] the [narrative] in a particular context so that the complexities adhering to a unique event, character or setting may be adequately rendered" [191].

Questions. To promote the adequate rendering of participants childhood memories I also had to avoid developing research questions that were closed-ended while also making sure the interview questions guided participants to touch on memories that would address my research questions. When developing interview questions, oral historians are faced with tensions between developing pointed questions concerning a particular research inquiry and refraining from asking questions that allow for the interviewee to determine the direction of the interview.

> This is, however, an issue which can raise strong feelings among historians and sociologists. A contrast may be made between so-called box-ticking 'questionnaires' whose rigidly structured logical patterns so inhibit the memory that the 'respondent' – again the choice of term itself is suggestive—is reduced to monosyllabic or very short answers; and, at the other extreme, not so much an 'interview' at all, but a free 'conversation' in which the 'person', 'tradition bearer', 'witness', or 'participant' is 'invited to talk' on a matter of mutual interest.[192]

During interviews, I wanted participants to talk freely about their childhood experiences so that I might capture thick descriptions that would provide a window into the interior of their past childhoods. But too, across interviews, I wanted to be sure I consistently captured data related to the themes (i.e., school, spaces associated with school, family, and community). Therefore, I created open-ended interview questions designed to guide participants across a landscape of themes without controlling or binding what participants could say about these themes. My interview questions served as thematic signpost (e.g., let's now talk about your schooling experiences, or tell me about your role as a child within your family) upon which

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[191] Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner, "Arts-Based Educational Research," *Complementary Methods for Research in Education* 2 (1997): 97.

[192] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford university press, 2017), 311.

anchored participants memories but left participants free to openly recall and discuss what they remembered and what they felt was important.

I began each interview asking participants demographic information about their families and themselves. Some of these questions included the names of their parents, grandparents, and their occupations. I also asked each participant to name their siblings if they had them. I asked participants to "tell me a bit about your parents…siblings." These types of questions helped me to get a sense of each participants' familial context as a child. In addition, these basic demographic and descriptive questions helped each participant get comfortable in the interview and begin to access their past without having to focus on themselves right away.

Following demographic questions, I asked participants questions about their schooling experiences. I would start with the question, "Now that you have told me about your family and your siblings, who was "little [participant's name]" in the family? What was your personality/role etc.? This question led participants to envision themselves as a child and talk about the things they were experiencing or doing within their family dynamic. Once they spoke a bit about themselves as a child, I would then shift the interview by asking them to talk about their schooling experiences. These questions would start with, "Now that I understand who "little [participant's name]" was in the family, I'm interested in how you experienced school. Can you share an early memory?

At times, when talking about their experiences as children, participants would drift from themes as their memory threaded itself from one "episode within their life" to the next.[193] During

[193] Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2010), 148.

these moments, I didn't stop the participant.[194] I listened and made jottings or mental notes to later guide the participant back to an incomplete thought related to a particular theme.[195] Many times, participants would return to their original thought without my prompting. Other times, when there was a natural pause in the interview, I would ask probing questions that would bring the participant back to a particular theme to finish their account. To ask probing questions, I drew from Thompson's (2017) approach to conducting oral history interviews, where I employed particular phrases to further establish facts, get deeper descriptions or additional comments from once-children. For example, Thompson suggests the use of "open-eyed" type questions like:

- Tell me all about…
- What did you think/feel about that?
- Can you describe to me?
- All right, so you're in—. Shut your eyes, and give a running commentary—what you see, see, hear… (p. 315).

Because my research questions sought to capture the experiences and actions of once-children of Rosenwald Schools and because these stories have been scantly documented in archives and historical research, it was important to me that my interview methods illicit thick descriptions associated with participants' childhoods that amplified and fully captured their experiences and actions. In other words, I had to guide the interview process without adding so much structure that the participants could not fully engage their memories and lead the telling of their own stories.[196]

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[194] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2017.

[195] Robert M Emerson, Rachel I Fretz, and Linda L Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (University of Chicago Press, 2011); Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2017.

[196] Bourdieu, "Understanding" (1996) 17-37], As cited in Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2017, 312.

Accessing the Once-Child. At the beginning of each interview, I explained to each participant that I was interested in speaking with their inner child. I explained that I wanted them to feel free to discuss not only experiences they recalled but also how those experiences felt in the past. I supported their tapping into their past experiences and feelings by asking following up questions that probed deeper into their feelings or actions as a child. For example, if a participant mentioned, "the walk to school was every day," I would ask, "Do you remember what every day felt like?" or "What did you have to do every day on the walk? Do you remember how your morning started?" Questions like these typically yielded deeper memories.

Furthermore, I used material objects, to help participants access childhood experiences and emotions in the oral history interviews. Prior to the interviews, I asked once-children to bring material objects to the interview. I explained to each once-child that these items could be materials they created or used during their time attending PCRS (or their childhoods more generally). I told participants that the material objects they choose could include photographs, school memorabilia, and childhood writings as well as items they may have worn in childhood (i.e., a class ring, an article of clothing, etc.). This allowed once-children who did not have school related items in their possession to use other materials they may have created, owned, or used during childhood while attending PCRS.

Not all participants owned materials from childhood or brought items to the interview. Initially, I selected 20 photographs from the Fisk Rosenwald Archives to share with participants in interviews. I thought the photographs might help participants access their own childhood memories. At the time I didn't take into consideration that the photographs were taken between 1916 and the1930s. It appeared participants didn't connect with the photographs because they

depicted life in and around Rosenwald Schools in previous generations. After trying this technique with five participants, I decided to abandon it.

In lieu of sharing archival photographs to elicit childhood memories for participants who did not have their own material objects, I tried to hone in on intangible objects participants mentioned during their interview and asked questions that helped the participant visualize the object. By intangible object, I mean an object that was not physically in the interview but was referenced by the participant and could have been more deeply visualized with my prompting.[197] For example, a participant may have mentioned a favorite doll. In instances such as these, I would ask the participant to describe the doll– "Do you remember the doll's name? Can you describe the doll, her clothes or her hair? What kinds of things do you remember doing with the doll?" These types of questions would help the participant visualize the object and experiences related to the object which tapped into deeper memories related to childhood.

For participants who did bring an object to their interview, I used the last 30 minutes of the interview, to ask the participant to tell me about the object. This was always after the once-child and I had talked extensively about their childhood in PCRS. Although participant responses varied in depth, I found the inclusion of participant's material objects in the interview process amplified and aided my ability to capture the experiences and emotions of once-children more deeply.

First, sharing material objects in interviews, helped once-children to better understand my goal which was to use the interview process to access their once-childhoods in the *now*, through their memories of childhood in and around PCRS. The material objects served to "build a bridge

[197] Susan Naomi Nordstrom, "Object-Interviews: Folding, Unfolding, and Refolding Perceptions of Objects," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 12, no. 1 (2013): 237–57.

between the [oral history work] and what the [participant] needed to [be able to] understand the meaning and significance of what [was] going on…," which was me (the interviewer) trying to access childhood memory.[198] Bringing material objects into the interview provided "other expressive devices [which were] employed to reveal what might not be apparent." [199] In other words, initially participants might not have understood my aim to "speak with" their once-child. Requesting participants to bring and share a part of their once-childhood in the interview helped to show a concept (i.e., rememory) that is otherwise difficult to explain. The use of material objects to question once-children about their childhoods further conveyed my intent to speak with their once-child and deeply listen to their childhood voice, which included their childhood vantages and perspectives.

Second, questioning once-children about their material objects revealed the relationship between the material object and the participant. As participants discussed their memories playing with, creating, or using items, they provided a deeper window into their past childhood experiences and agencies (e.g., feelings, thoughts, doing, etc.). For example, as one participant reflected on his childhood school days photograph (i.e., yearbook picture) he reflected on the clothing he wore and how he curated his look for the photo. He recalled that his mother asked him, "How do you want to dress?" For his first ever school photo. This brought up past feelings of wanting to look like his teacher who he admired greatly (i.e., "I always wanted to look like Mr. Lemon. He was always so put together and he was a teacher and a businessman in the community."

198 Barone and Eisner, "Arts-Based Educational Research," 100.

199 Barone and Eisner, 100.

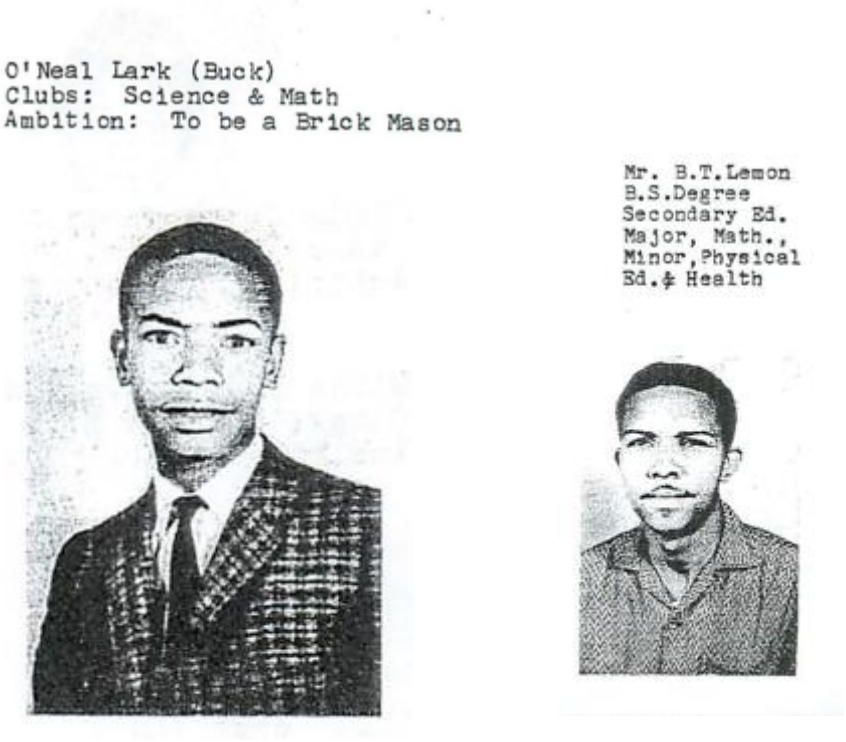
He also recalled how the community helped with his professional look (i.e., a suit jacket) because he had lost all of his clothing in a fire. Furthermore, his bond with his grandfather was embodied in his tie. His grandfather only owned two ties and would lend them "to no one." For picture day, his grandfather allowed him to wear one of his ties. Pictured below is the participant, O'Neal on the left and his teacher, Mr. Lemon on the right (See Figure 15). Introducing the photograph in the interview helped Mr. O'Neal to recall his own agency to use his clothing to articulate how he wanted to be seen as a child and was documented historically in the school's first yearbook.

In this instance, the participant and the object (i.e., photograph) "[B]ecame entangled, as both subjects and objects produce[d] knowledge."[200] While the participant recalled wanting to curate himself into an image of excellence, his clothing (and his story) demonstrated the particulars of his own agency (i.e., his perspective on his teacher, his imagination and creativity to model himself after what he believed his teacher stood for) and the various community supports that helped him articulate his vision. By crafting a portion of the oral history interview to interview participants about childhood materials (when available), I aimed to help participants more deeply engage their past childhood experiences and thereby gain a deeper understanding

[200] Nordstrom, "Object-Interviews: Folding, Unfolding, and Refolding Perceptions of Objects," 237.

(and later analysis) of then-children's experiences in school and associated with school. In short, "[participants] and objects help[ed] to materialize, or embody, life events…."[201]

Figure 15 O'Neal Lark's Yearbook Picture (left); and his teacher, Mr. Lemon's yearbook picture. Hopewell Annual. 1963. Amanda McKinstry Collection.



Data Analysis

Oral History Analysis

As previously stated, the final database for this study includes 43 oral history interviews.[202] All participants attended at least one of six Pickens County Rosenwald Schools:

[201] Nordstrom, 241.

[202] Recall there are 49 total interviews, but 43 interviews are included in the study.

Mamiesville Elementary, Pickensville Elementary, Salem, Elbelville, Hopewell High, Pickens County Training School (both high schools served children 1st – 12th grade). Since none of the participants in the study attended Salem or Elbelville the final data reflects historical accounts related to four of the six Pickens County RSW.

To organize my data, I used secure cloud programs to store and back up my data. I used MBox to store the data and used DropBox as a backup. I also backed up data on a 2TB hard drive. I also uploaded all transcription data into Atlas.ti., which is a qualitative data analysis software. After I uploaded, stored, and backed up the data, I began my analysis process with an exploration phase where I first "read [my] data and thought about it."[203] This included listening to the interview audio, reviewing interview notes, jottings, and fieldnotes. This process provided me an opportunity to first get a sense of the oral histories as a collection of narratives. As I listened and read, I became more acquainted with the data. When apparent, I corrected errors in transcripts – clarifying words or sentences that were translated incorrectly or mistakenly marked 'inaudible.' I freely created short jottings of ideas, and wonderings. I noted how memory appeared to be operating in the data. For example, I noticed participants expressed vivid childhood memories in deeply descriptive blocks of story. This understanding would later inform my decision to employ "incident to incident" coding.[204]

After the exploratory read, I began an iterative process of coding, data matrix development, memo writing and mapping. During the analysis process, I focused on my research questions and used critical childhood studies lens to identify children's voice and presence in the

[203] Hesse-Biber and Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 2010, 305.

[204] Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2006), 53.

data. I employed a "complimentary coding process" [205] which included descriptive, emotional, process, NVivo and incident to incident coding. Miles and Huberman (2014) maintain, "You do not need to stick with just one approach for your coding efforts; some of these can be compatibly "mixed and matched" as needed."[206] These complimentary coding techniques were needed in my approach because of the nature of oral history data. "In the broad sense, all testimonies normally carry within them triple potential: to explore and develop new interpretations, to establish or confirm an interpretation of past patterns or change, and to express what it felt like."[207] A complimentary approach fits my analysis process of these oral histories given (a) the multidimensional potential to answer my research questions which aimed to pinpoint and examine once-children's feelings, experiences, and actions, and (b) to center and interpret these historical voices that have seldom been captured with the empirical purpose of foregrounding Black children and their childhoods in and around Rosenwald Schools. Below I offer reasons for and examples of my coding process for each type of coding approach.

I used descriptive coding to assign codes to words, phrases or "data chunks."[208] These data captured contextual demographic data on each once-child which includes codes such as "date of birth," "dates of started school/date finished school,"[209] "graduation," etc. I also coded

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[205] Matthew B Miles, A Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook. 3rd," *SAGE*, 2014, 75.

[206] Huberman Miles and A Michael Huberman, "Saldana.(2014)," *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* 3 (n.d.): 74.

[207] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2017, 351.

[208] Miles and Huberman, "Saldana. (2014)," 74.

[209] During this time, it was difficult for students to graduate from school, particularly if they were from a sharecropping family. Several students were unable to graduate. Nevertheless, they may have achieved more education than the generation before them. And so, it was important to me that participants didn't feel diminished by questions concerned with "Did you graduate?".

for the economic background of each participant's family (e.g., sharecropper, farmer, owner, other). This data helped me identify a list of codes which contextualized once-children's socio-economic and educational context.[210] Most participants' parents farmed or sharecropped. A few participants' parents were not farmers or sharecroppers (i.e., school teachers, a school principal, moonshiner, midwife, carpenter, and landowners). Although everyone was poor, different types of jobs did afford some children a little bit more than their peers. For example, children of sharecroppers could not attend school regularly because they had to work fields; however, a child whose parent was a moonshiner or teacher did not have to work fields and therefore was able to attend school every day.

After I got a sense of the demographic snapshot of participants, I grouped the oral history transcripts by school and continued to code for words, phrases, and data chunks. During this process, I stayed close to the research questions coding for children's descriptions of "experiences" and "actions" "in" and "around" schools. This meant I focused on what once-children were doing, feeling, thinking, and saying – as well as their descriptions of the places where their experiences or actions happened. I coded participant's descriptive mentions of places associated with school (e.g., "walk to school", " "school," "playground") and their actions or experiences therein (e.g., "cold", "long", "playing," "not for kids," or "walked").

Instead, I asked "When did you leave school?" If the participant graduated, they would say so and if not, they would say "I had to leave after the 10th grade." Whichever way the participant answered, I felt they were left with their dignity – that they pursued education in the best way they could. Furthermore, the focus of this dissertation is not concerned with whether participants graduated or not. Hence, I thought it was best to not press participants but rather to allow them to say what they wanted about completing school. In most cases, this approach generated a definitive answer related to elementary and high school graduation.

[210] Charles S. Johnson, *Growing up in the Black Belt.*, 1941.

Emotional coding. I employed emotional coding which helped to capture "emotions recalled and/or experienced by [participants]" in the past.[211] With emotional coding, I paid great attention to participants' emotional memories related to past childhood experiences. As I read participants' recollections of their experiences or actions, I asked myself 'what emotions did participants associate with their experiences or actions. In other words, as the participant experienced or acted what do they say they thought or felt (e.g., "fear," "pain," "community care," or "wonderment") related to the past childhood experience? I also kept in mind (and coded for) whether the experience or action occurred in or around school (e.g., "Wlk2Schl – fear" or "Wlk2School – wonderment"). Hence the codes identified the type of data (i.e., OH = oral history), a combination of place, experience/action, and associated emotions. Examples of emotional codes in the data were:

OH: Wlk2sch – Felt Protection
OH: Wlk2sch – Felt Fear
OH: Wlk2sch – Felt Wonderment

This helped me to begin to isolate and decipher emotions once-children associated with their childhood *experiences* and actions in different spaces associated with school.

Process Codes. I used process coding to identify points in the data where participants recalled their actions as children or actions of others (i.e., doing, saying) as experienced or observed by the participant. Process codes "connote observable and conceptual action in the data. Processes also imply actions intertwined with the dynamics of time..."[212] Examples of these codes are:

OH: Wlk2sch – Protecting Peers
OH: Wlk2sch – Working before school

[211] Miles and Huberman, "Saldana. (2014)," 75.

[212] Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook. 3rd," 75.

OH: Wlk2sch – Walking Distances
OH: Wlk2sch – Playing

This helped me to isolate and decipher once-children's *actions* (or how they might have recalled being acted upon) in spaces in and around school.

NVivo Codes. I used NVivo codes to identify phrases or words participants used in the interview that uniquely described their experiences, perceptions, or actions. NVivo codes "[u]se words or short phrases from the participants own language in the data record as codes … to prioritize or honor the participants voice. Phrases that are used repeatedly by participants are good leads… [that might] point to regularities or patterns in the setting."[213] Examples of NVivo codes related to, for example, the category Walk to School (i.e., "Wlk2Schl") were *"And it was every day," "So, we did it,"* and *"Woods Woods Woods."* NVivo codes helped me to consider deeper nuanced meaning. For example, the code OH: Wlk2schl – "it was every day" led to a deeper analysis of the labor of getting to school and particularly the *labor that was* embedded in the children's routine trek to school.

In other instances, NVivo codes captured the vantage or perspective of how a once-child might have experienced a particular incident or phenomenon. For example, participant Mary's statement associated with the "Wlk2Schl," *"there was nothing but woods woods woods"* captured her sensation of being surrounded. The statement provided a sensation of a large area that engulfed Mary. The implied size and vastness also imbued a sense of mystery, and potential danger associated with the terrain which highlighted her innocence and vulnerability. Also, the vastness imbued in Mary's NVivo code also signaled her recollection of (and feeling of) her small stature in comparison to the massive trees. But too the sense of vastness captured a young

[213] Matthew B Miles, AM Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook. Thousand Oaks, California," 2014, 74.

Mary surrounded in a beautiful natural world. This would later inform more focused codes such as "labor," "innocence," and "vulnerability" and "material terrain/conditions."

Where applicable, I conducted incident by incident coding.[214] I chose this coding approach because I noticed longer storied incidents of memory in the data that richly illuminated what was nuanced, figurative, and complex about the quotidian activity and experiences of once-children's lives. Charmaz (2004) indicates incident by incident coding allows for the analysis to "Break through the ordinariness of routine events [which] takes effort. To gain analytic insights from observations of routine actions in ordinary settings… ."[215] While the coding techniques (i.e., emotional coding, process coding, and NVivo coding) helped me to detect what was happening in the data, incident by incident coding helped me to look deeper into nuances of participants' ordinary childhood experiences and actions. Within the ordinary I could search for what seemed spectacular, and poignant from their children's perspectives. For example, two participants provide separate accounts related to the mandatory nature of the walk to school (See Figure 16). Each account maintains the walk to school was *required*. Both participants use 'weather' to underscore the mandatory nature of going to school – it had to be done despite the weather. However, Narrator II's account pulls us deeper into a vivid account of how a sharecropper's child experienced the mandatory nature of this walk to school. He was unable to attend school regularly but was still required to go on off days or seasons. Literally, he had to endure weather, but it was also a figurative weathering as he endured the weight of sharecropping. Because of survival, as a sharecropper's child, Narrator II had to work which meant having to miss school. Missing school for weeks and months at a time adversely effected

[214] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 53.

[215] Charmaz, 53.

his ability to be prepared for school. He experienced falling behind and felt physical pain (i.e., stomach aches) associated with the anxiety of being unprepared. While both participants in this example clearly state school was "mandatory" as marked by having to weather the trek no matter what, Narrator II gets more descriptive and adds depth with more context related to how children – particularly a sharecropper's child – felt the mandatory nature of getting there. This incident also broadens the notion of "weather," which pushed me to think of weathering literally but also figuratively. Both were related to what would eventually become a larger theme of "Every Day Labor" on the Wlk2schl and both, to varying degrees, captured the nuanced ways children faced labor in spaces associate with school – namely the trek to school.

As I continued to work across the data, iteratively moving back and forth between interviews and applying each of these coding approaches to the data, comparing, contrasting, and interpreting accounts. These complimentary codes within data chunks helped me to identify an "inventory of topics" across interviews which I would "index and categorize".[216]During this phase, I used Atlas.ti to generate code and quotation matrix by categories in excel category. These categorical matrices allowed me to look across and within coded quotations to further refine and build concepts. I also tracked on whether a code was operating in, around (or both in and around) school and whether the code represented an experience or action. I considered the

[216] Miles and Huberman, “Saldana.(2014),” 74.

Figure 16 Example of Incident-to-Incident Coding

Narrator I	Narrator II
So we walked to school every day whether it was rain, shine, sleet, or snow.	Uh... A typical day going to school... is that didn't want to go, or we had to walk a pretty good piece in the cold to catch the bus. And, uh, seem like it was colder then than it do now, so... I remember the ground being froze and we had to walk on that ice and stuff you know, to catch the bus, and uh, when I get to school, sick to the stomach, inside, so you know. Going into school, didn't have my homework. Uh, sometimes the teacher would tell you to go down in the woods and get some wood to make a fire. I was glad to do that to get out of the classroom and stuff like that, you know. But, uh, like I said, education... going in there trying to learn something, mm-mm (negative) It wasn't even on my mind. INT: Was that... is that... I guess I'm saying... Well, why did you feel sick to the stomach? 'Cause I didn't know nothing, that's why. Now... now it was some people in there, they were real smart now, because they didn't have to do the stuff we had to do [i.e., sharecropping], you know what I'm saying? INT: Mm-hmm (affirmative) They were forcing it [forced] to come everyday and stuff like that. And they were real smart, but uh, no, I didn't [get to attend everyday], you know. Now, I was pretty good in math now.

codes possible meanings related to participants' experiences and actions in a particular space. For example, I generated a matrix for the category 'walk to school' (See Table 9). This matrix included all codes associated with once-children's walk to school along with the associated quotations and comments. I compared the codes and associated text within the matrix to identify emerging themes. For example, across the data within the category of 'walk2schl' children recall having experienced pain (e.g., so cold, just aching, cold toes, etc.) brought on by inclement weather along the routine walk to school. Furthermore, children often described their experiences on the wlk2schl as routine and mandatory through NVivo codes "we had to" "every day" or "it was every day."

In this instance (See Figure 17), "every day labor" became a dominant theme as codes of weather, distance, and time were evident across the data and within the category "Wlk2schl." The matric below (Table 9) provides an example of this process for the code "weather."

Table 9 Coding Matrix

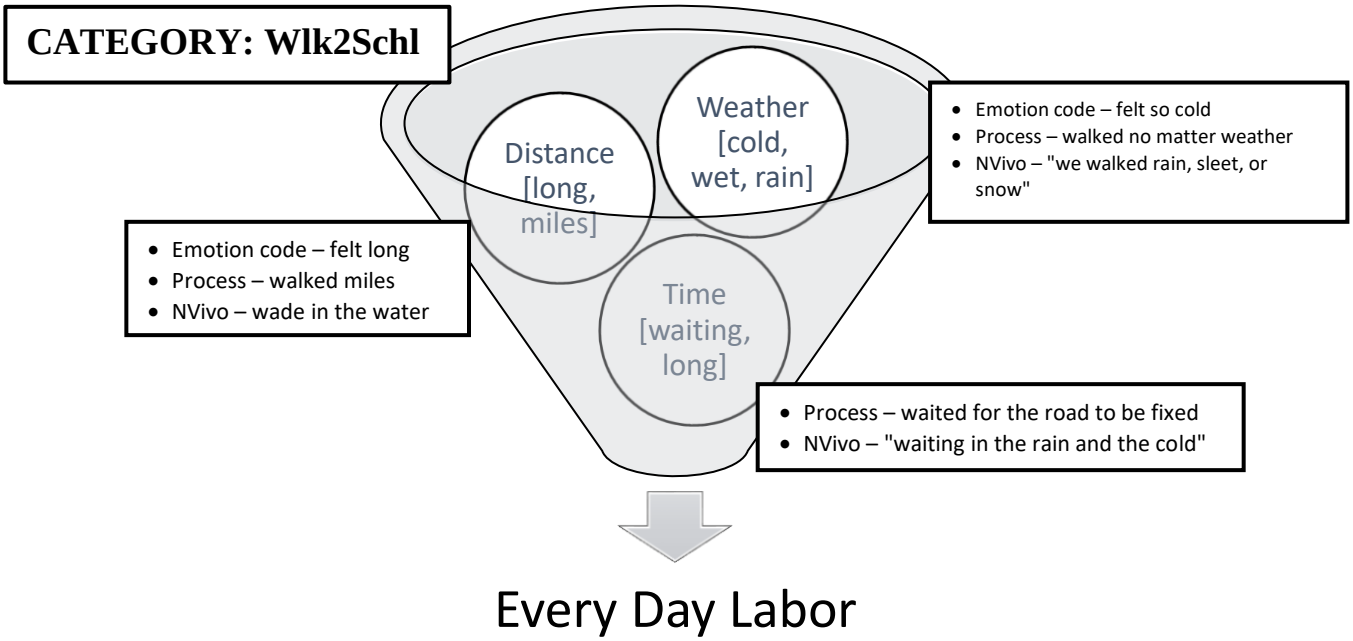
Document	Text Content	Codes	Analytic/More focused	RQ1- exp/action	RQ2 org/culture
OH: PCT | PCTS - John Wilkins Jr 180720_001(1).docx	I'd go to school every day **I could. And I took what a call... I wade in water.** We wade in water five miles. Before we had to go, we wade water... Rust from the wagon, rust, and no built road. It was just field and things. And working farm fields.Mary: We just got wagon roads.John Jr.: 00:21:14 We'd wade in water. Up on the hill "Now you gotta start darting some of that water. Water you gonna have to waste... Wade you go around it," and I started doing that. They lasted a little long. I thought everything last long when they started talking to me, and I start obeying em. I wasn't hard-headed. I really wasn't. I loved that Mom and Dad are too hard to be hard-headed.	OH: Wlk2sch - wade in the water	Weather: push ahead navigate weather (wet); laborious	exp water ruining shoes; navigate/maneuver	
OH: PKV | PCTS - ^Caroline Locke Wright 001 & 002.docx	**So in the wintertime when the wood get really cold and me** and Paulette done played in the dirt and got cold- x- getting really cold; played in the dirt490Speaker 1:0:20:46(Laughter). Uh-huh. x 491Caroline:0:20:48We, we knew where to get our hands warm. **We stopped at Ms. Cream's. x- getting hands warm -** stopping at neighbors on the way492Speaker 1:0:20:51(Laughter). x 493Caroline:0:20:51(Laughter). "Come on in here." [sing's this] x 494Speaker 1:0:20:51(Laughter). x 495Caroline:0:20:51"Warm those hands. You all are going to be late for school." x 496Speaker 1:0:21:00Oh. x 497Caroline:0:21:00She would warm us up a little bit.	OH: Wlk2sch - Material Terrain - Feeling - Weather, OH: Wlk2sch - Protection - Felt - community care	Weather: getting really cold play support 'warm those hands'; conditions/laborious	feeling really cold	
OH: PKV | PCTS - ^Mary Fuseyamore 003.docx	And I would sit on the first bench. I remember being cold when I would get here and we would all have to huddle around the potbelly stove to get warm. While we were waiting for what we called "Devotion." Because devotion was every morning before classes start, the Principal - is this on?	OH: Wlk2sch - Material Terrain - Feeling - Weather	Weather: cold huddle get warm; conditions/laborious	warming self feeling cold exp/action cuddling w/comrades	depend on comrades bodies/one another for warmth

The Excel matrix was generated with Atlas.ti. The matrix is organized according to transcript "line number," assigned "code," the quote associated with the code "text content" and any notes created "comment." I added columns which included "analytic/more focused codes,"[217] and "RQ1 and RQ2" (i.e., research questions 1 and 2). Adding these additional columns allowed me to track the development of my codes and be sure I was keeping my research questions in focus. Within categories, I used the most frequent and significant codes (e.g., "cold," "material terrain" "feeling", "every day" "weather") to examine experiences and actions across participants and within the "Wlk2Schl" category. As illustrated above "wade in the water," "getting really cold," and "huddle [to] get warm" moved from being an initial code to a more focused code as I considered what the literal experience of "weather" meant as participants mentioned experiencing cold, wet, rain, etc. But as I thought about the feelings (i.e., emotions) or actions

[217] Hesse-Biber and Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 2010, 312.

(i.e., process) participants attached to experiencing weather, I had to consider deeper meanings which signaled "routine labor." Figure Thirteen provides a visual mapping of how complimentary coding helped me pinpoint the nuances in the otherwise ordinary, everyday experience of weather. As I considered once-children's articulations of feelings of being stalled getting to school, not making it home, feeling cold toes that had to be thawed by a fire, and other instances of enduring weather, the theme of *labor* was amplified and/or elaborated.

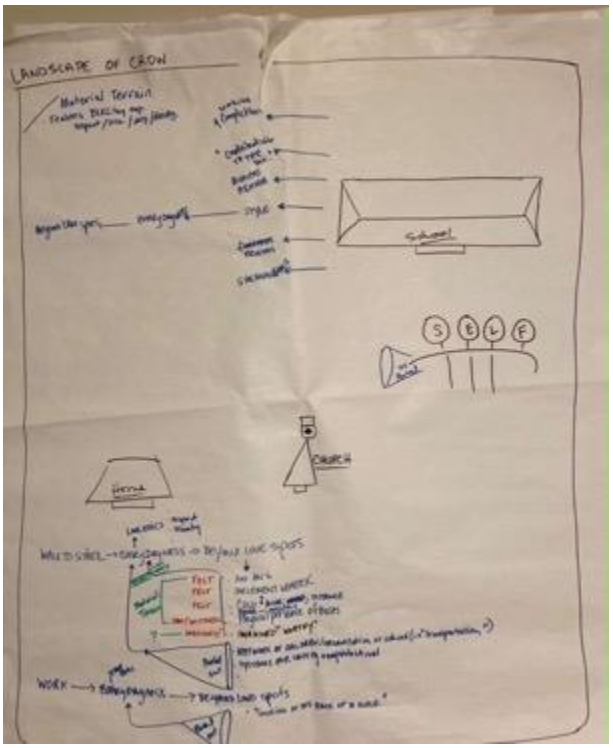
Figure 17 Visual Mapping of Complimentary Coding



As I moved through this process, I wrote analytic memos to document my ideas and interpretations as I compared segments of data across emerging themes "comparing [participants] experiences, actions, and interpretations."[218] This process enabled me to test themes and identify

[218] Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded Theory," in *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (Oxford University Press, 2004), 59.

Figure 18 Visual Mind Map



sub-categories (e.g., "supports," "protections") operating within the sub-categories while remaining close to my research questions across large categories of data.

I grappled with nuanced literal and figurative meanings of themes as captured by associated data. I allowed myself to document my ideas in various formats which helped me to visualize and think about the data more expansively. I created visual mind maps and journaled[219] to help shape my thinking and conceptual ideas that, initially, may have been difficult to articulate.[220] For example, what exactly did once-children mean when they frequently used the term "it was every day?" What did this expression – "every day" embody? Figure Eleven

[219] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2017.

[220] Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner, "Arts-Based Educational Research," *Complimentary Methods for Research in Education* 2 (1997): 95–109; Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2010).

provides an example of my early work to understand how children recalled moving across the landscape around school and what could have been meant by the NVivo code of the "every day", which I term 'everydayness' in the sketch. Children were describing trekking across the landscape, feeling the landscape, and having feelings inside themselves. With this visual I was working to understand how these experiences, sensations, and actions were operating on the journey. The figure helped me think about the '*every day'* as the embodiment of routine labor children described having experienced and performed.

Material Object Analysis

With regards to how I approached the analysis of material objects, I focused my analysis on visual and written data that was created by then-children. This data included two hundred sixteen personal photographs (William Gore Collection); one yearbook (i.e., The 1963 Owls Hopewell Annual); and one memory book (Willie Howard Collection).[221] As previously mentioned, I scanned each object into Atlas.ti. I explored each object according to the type of object (i.e., written, or visual), to first describe the object. I returned to the materials and conducted descriptive coding to identify then-children's voices or presence as relayed via the material object.[222] During descriptive coding, I considered what I knew about the then-child (or children) that created the object and where possible, I also examined each object to get a sense of the where, and why the object may have been produced, as well as what may have been the

[221] This data represents a slice of the total data I have collected. See Data Collection section for the total number of material objects collected by category.

[222] Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook. Thousand Oaks, California."

potential uses of the objects. [223] These steps helped me to determine how "These documents provided a useful resource of visualizing the narratives…" in this study.[224]

With the codes I created from the oral-history analysis in mind, I repeated the emotional, NVivo, and process coding across each type of data. I remained open to any new codes that may have emerged from the material data. As with the oral history data, I coded with focused attention on what then-children said, did, thought, and felt as expressed via the material (Miles et. al., 2014). This process helped me to identify how the visual data supported or countered emerging themes within the oral history data. For example, there was no material data related to the labor of walking to school however, visual, and written data captured then-children's sense of children's laboring through school via writings in the Hopewell Annual. This would confirm then-children's sense of struggle for education which was also articulated in once-children's descriptions of their efforts to walk to school. Furthermore, material data evidenced once-children's memories of having experienced camaraderie and belonging in school and on the school playgrounds. Photographs demonstrated "laughter, "physical closeness," "playfulness" and "smiles." This data supported once-children's memories of camaraderie, togetherness and belonging among classmates.

[223] Mr. William Gore passed away a few months after sharing his photographs with me and so I was unable to interview him about his photograph collection. On one of my visits to the field, I did interview his sister, of whom he lived with, but she didn't know much about his photography process. I am still connected to her (Ms. Annie Pearl Gore) and hope to interview more family members in the future.

[224] David G. García and Tara J. Yosso, “Recovering Our Past: A Methodological Reflection,” History of Education Quarterly 60, no. 1 (2020): 68, https://doi.org/10.1017/heq.2019.50.

Archival Analysis

Again, I also used Atlas.ti data management software to systematically track and examine the archival data. First, I examined the group of archival documents (i.e., 1,288 reports, administrative documents) to identify documents that referenced the RWS Program in Alabama, and specifically Pickens County. Particularly, I searched for information that may have provided insight related to the educational context of RWS Schools in Alabama and Pickens during the period of study. Of the 55 documents that were relevant to Alabama or Pickens County, half (i.e., 21) were inside of the study period. Taken together, these documents provided information related to the presence of RWS in Pickens County, early oversight of the program by RWS agents (Pickens), efforts to shift program oversight from the building program to "teachers and inside the schools"[225] (nationally and Pickens), and the desegregation timeline and processes (in Pickens). For example, a "general report" shared at a meeting in Detroit (1939)[226] discussed shifting the Rosenwald School Program's focus "from buildings to teachers and other aspects of work inside the school." This work was to be focused on the development teachers, curriculum, and unifying the Rosenwald Program throughout the country with a particular focus to "[E]ffect the social, physical, cultural, and material rehabilitation of the people of the rural South."[227] This was relevant to the context of my project because Pickens County Training School was listed as one of three normal schools chosen to pilot this new initiative. This document had the potential to lead me to further information about educational reform done in Pickens. Unfortunately, I

[225] John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Special Collections, Julius Rosenwald Collection, box 323, folder 5.

[226] While this document is dated outside of my study period, it forecast work to be done within the study period (1940 – 1969). Hence, I included the document in the study.

couldn’t find any additional information related to the initiative beyond the report. Nevertheless, the documents provided contextual evidence related to the establishment of Rosenwald Programs in Pickens County, the Rosenwald Program's increased interest in the internal conditions of the schools and its focus on teacher preparation and curriculum. There was also evidence of a strong focus on vocational education.

Second, I examined the archival photographs for the presence and voice of Black children. Photographs included images related to the Rosenwald School program in Alabama and Pickens County. I tracked on whether Black children were apparent in the photographs and if apparent, what the presence of Black children embodied. I examined these data with an eye toward Black children's actions or experiences that might be read in the photos (e.g., feeling, thinking, doing, saying). During my analysis, I discovered all 78 archival photographs collected from institutional archives that were related to Alabama and/or Pickens County were dated prior to 1938. None of the photographs captured children who attended Rosenwald Schools during the period of study (1940 – 1969). However, the photographs provided useful visual data related to the historical context of Black children in Pickens County educational experiences just one or two generations prior to the once-children who are the focus of this study. These photographs confirmed the focus on vocational education and the imagined futures for Black children as lowered laborers in society. Data also indicated that these vocational programs were being funded at the national level through the Smith - Hughes Act which pushed for vocational education and provided government funding to those schools that administer a vocational program.[228] This data helped to support oral history data where once-children indicated their parents and grandparents educational pasts which included minimal education, illiteracy, or the

struggles of trying to become educated in a society that sought to constrain education's liberatory potential for African American's.

Validation

To evaluate the strength of my evidence, I used triangulation as a strategy to "pattern match" (Miles et. al., 2014, p. 299) using my three sources of data – oral histories, material objects and archival documents. Across the data, I looked for proof or inconsistencies relative to the themes I have identified in the data.[229] For example, I previously mentioned that once-children recalled feeling a sense of "comradery" among their peers. Visual and written in-time data also evidence then-children felt a sense of comradery which supports once-children's accounts and provided a deeper window into visual and written in-time articulations of comradery. Also, in some instances I was able to validate memories through institutional or personal archival data. For example, personal collections provided both literal and figurative data to support participants' experiences. A grade book from the personal archive of Ms. Wilkinson, a former teacher and librarian at the Pickens County Training School, revealed the steady increase of students attending enrollment between 1926 and 1969. The documentation of the growth of the student body parallels students' sense that they were among a crowd of children going to school. Photographs from the Gored personal collection illustrates children's experiences of comradery and belonging participants recall in their interviews. Institutional archives and historic newspapers validated contextual information that aligned with participants' accounts of sharecropping, the history of slavery in the area, and issues related to school segregation. Lastly,

[229] Hesse-Biber and Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 2010; Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook. Thousand Oaks, California."

during the analysis process I checked in with participants via phone, Facebook, or text when I needed to confirm or clarify data or check my analysis of the data.

From this process I decided upon the most significant themes across the study. Via this research process, I have been able to understand what the voices of once-children and then-children who attended PCRS during the Jim Crow era reveal about the presence and experiences of Black childhood in and around Pickens County Rosenwald Schools.

Representation of Data

Apart from data analysis, but important to this project has been the representation of the data. Through oral history methods, the data in this study relied heavily on the voices of once-children to recall and share their personal experiences and actions in school and spaces associated with school. It has been important for me to select research methods that render these voices more fully because (a) they have been scantly documented and (b) because Black children's historical educational experiences have not often been told from their perspectives. I wanted to provide a more pronounced historical articulation of Black children and their childhoods in their educational contexts. For this reason, writing once-children's stories as told by them, in vignettes became critical to not only accessing and analyzing but also relaying Black children's vantage and perspective.

I thought that providing only brief excerpts from participants' transcripts would flatten otherwise full accounts of their experiences, actions, and knowledges as youngsters. I decided one way to render their voices more fully was through vignettes which are brief stories that capture lived experiences "[i]n pictorial form.[230] I first drew these ideas from historical

[230] Malcolm Hill, "Participatory Research with Children," *Child & Family Social Work* 2, no. 3 (1997): 177.

sociological research that displayed Black children's interview data via short narratives where Black children discussed their experiences in segregated communities and schools.[231] Building upon those approaches, I borrowed from elements of theater. Specifically, I wrote the findings in vignettes (i.e., acts and scenes) which are "short impressionistic scenes that focus on one moment or character and gives an impression about the character, idea, setting, and/or object. It's a descriptive passage, more about evoking meaning through imagery than about plot."[232] The goal was not to merely tell the children's stories but to focus on the fullness of their experiences,[233] and establish "thought pictures" of sorts.

I also sought to leave participants' voices intact. In other words, I did not construct the vignettes. As the researcher, I selected the vignettes to be displayed with the intention of articulating the findings within the study and to foreground individual and collective voices of Black children in the educational past.

"The collective voice of the people, once silenced, has a right to be heard. Oral history is not only a tool or method for recovering history; it also is a theory of history which maintains

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[231] Allison Davis and John Dollard, "Children of Bondage: The Personality Development of Negro Youth in the Urban South.," 1940; E Franklin Frazier, "Negro Youth at the Crossways.," 1940; Johnson, *Growing up in the Black Belt.* Across these studies and to varying degrees, the authors displayed African American youths interview data in short narratives. In the narratives the children discussed their lived experiences in the families, communities, and schools. These narratives provided a deeper window into the children's lives and experiences which I have not been able to find in other historical studies..

[232] Barter, Christine, and Emma Renold. "The use of vignettes in qualitative research." Social research update 25, no. 9 (1999): 1-6.; Langer, Phil C. "The research vignette: Reflexive writing as interpretative representation of qualitative inquiry—A methodological proposition." Qualitative Inquiry 22, no. 9 (2016): 735-744.; Hughes, Rhidian, and Meg Huby. "The construction and interpretation of vignettes in social research." Social Work and Social Sciences Review 11, no. 1 (2012): 36-51.

[233] Patricia Leavy, Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice (Guilford Publications, 2015), 46.

that the common folk and the dispossessed have a history and that this history must be written."[234] Capturing interview data in pictorial form helped to personify real life scenarios as the reader was invited into the particular of participants memories. While experiencing the data intimately, the participant – the once-child—becomes humanized on the page and in the research. In the next three chapters I reveal this humanization empirically.

[234] Gary Y Okihiro, "Oral History and the Writing of Ethnic History: A Reconnaissance into Method and Theory," *The Oral History Review* 9, no. 1 (1981): 42.

Chapter IV | Everyday Labor

Introduction

Once-children in this study were at an educational crossroads. They are primarily the sons and daughters of farmers and sharecroppers. Only a select few narrators (i.e., seven or 16.7%) are the children of teachers, laborers, or artisans (e.g., manufacturing, midwifery, etc.). Their grandparents and parents had limited opportunities to attend or finish school. Their grandparents – who were either born into slavery or just one generation removed from slavery – had little to no opportunity to become educated. For many of their parents, opportunities to pursue education were still limited. Some of their parents were able to complete elementary or

Figure 19 Pickens County Training School Gradebook. "P.C.T.S.

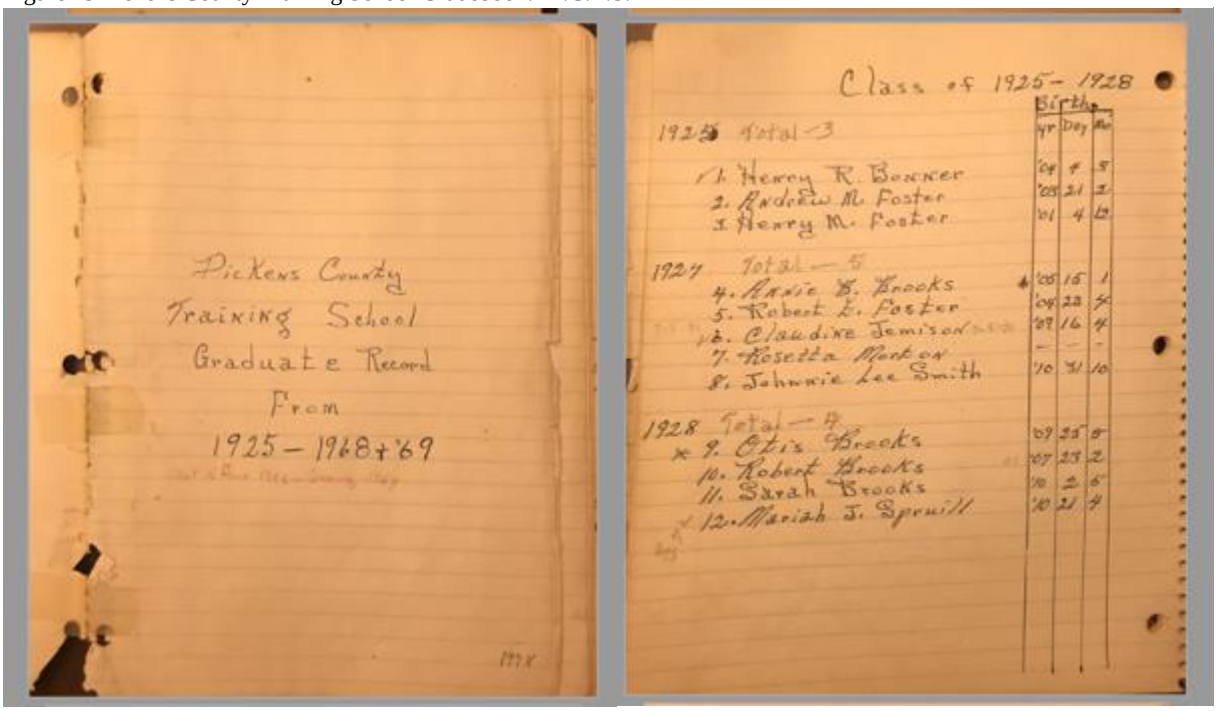
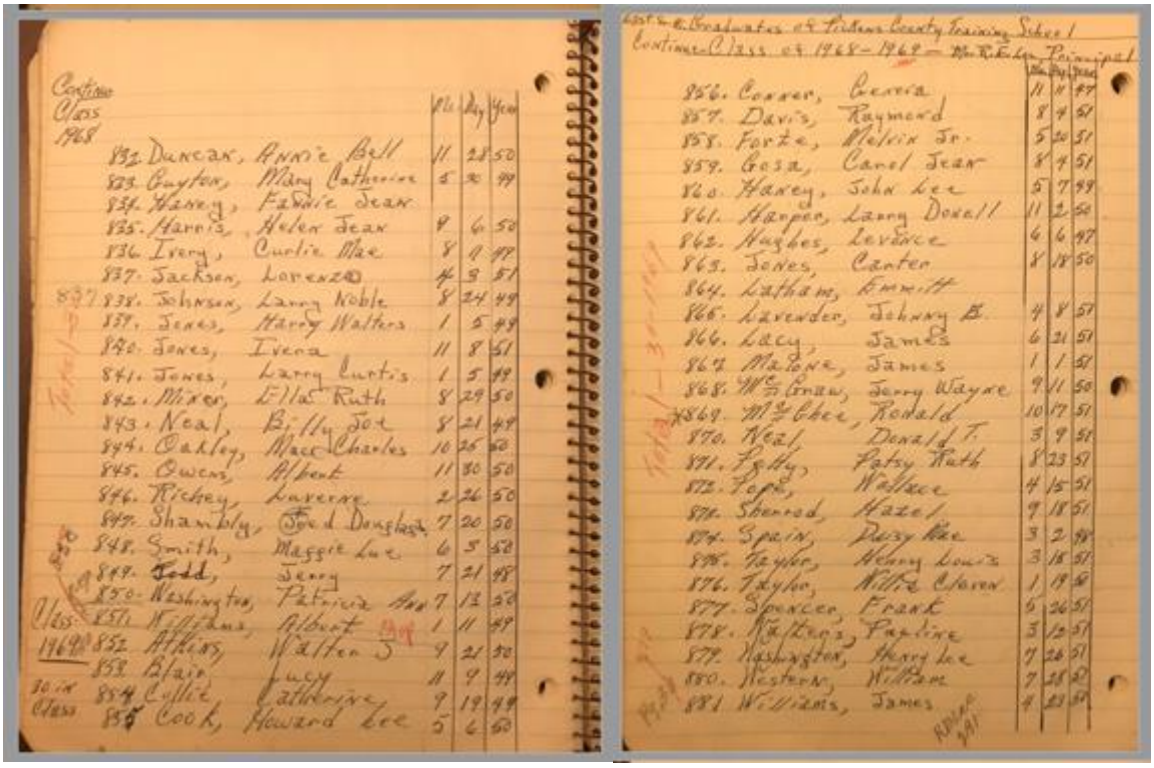


Figure 20 Pickens County Training School Gradebook.



middle school before having to leave school to work and help their families survive. A select few finished high school. The Pickens County Training School gradebook illustrates how few children were able to complete high school in the 1920s. Graduating classes between 1925-1928 averaged less than five students (See Figure 19). Those classes graduating in the 1940s through the 1960s averaged 30 students (See Figure 20).[235] The children who are the subject of this chapter (and this study more broadly) are not the first to attend school in Pickens. However, they are the third or fourth generation to step onto the path to school. This educational journey that had been more difficult for generations before, was still difficult in their time although once-children in this study had more educational access than previous generations.

235 Henrietta Wilkinson, "Pickens County Training School Gradebook, 1926 - 1969" (Personal Collection Wilkinson Family, 1969).

At this moment in time, education is happening on the landscape of school segregation which meant they were experiencing poorer schooling conditions, and fewer material resources. While resources were compromised, the children were being educated by Black teachers who were caring disciplinarians committed to the children's education.[236] As we open this chapter with an awareness of the historical, racial, socioeconomic, and educational landscape of children's ancestors and parents, I implore the reader turn with me and descend into the everyday worlds of Black children on their walk to school sometime between 1940 and 1969.

ACT I: "That Was a Lonnnng Walk"

Throughout oral-history interviews with my narrators, I asked them to tell me about their first memories of their schooling experiences. While I had imagined once-children would have begun with recollections of their experiences in the classroom, narrators consistently began with memories of their morning routines as they prepared to go to school – particularly the trek to school. Whether children walked or were bused to school, the oral-histories of once-children revealed the journey to school was laborious. Once-children illustrated the journey to school was a routine labor riddled with constraints brought on by distance, time, land, and weather. But too, while Black children faced these constraints, they also experienced “portals.” These portals were both a function of their own agency and the supports and protections provided by peers, family, and adult others and provided a way forward despite considerable constraints or burdens.

The every day labors the children faced on the land alongside these portals forward provide a window into the various ways Black children both experienced and navigated the trek.

[236] Vanessa Siddle Walker, Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1996).

As they labored forward, Black children's bodies were both acting and being acted upon (e.g., faced the cold, trekked through wet land). As the children labored forward their innocence and vulnerability became pronounced. The community responded to their labored presence by offering support and protection. I argue Black children's labored presence on the road and the supports and protections offered to them illustrated their childhood status. Furthermore, their presence as vulnerable and innocent actors changed the road as adults who saw their innocence and vulnerability expanded the road into a space that not was not only for wagons and work, but also for supporting Black children trying to safely pass through to the schoolhouse. In the following scenes I illustrate Black children's labored experiences getting to school and their experiences of feeling supported and protected along the way.

Scene I: And it was Every Day

Ethel Grice & Janie Bell Curry-Sherrod

On July 6, 2018, I interviewed cousins, Ethel Grice, and Janie Bell Curry-Sherrod together. The ladies were eager to discuss their childhood experiences at Pickensville Elementary and Pickens County Training School. They were so eager, that in the interview I found them reminiscent of little girls scrambling to get their turn to speak. Often, they finished one another's sentences, stacking their memories like building blocks. In some respects, although I was interviewing two people, their transcript read as one story – one experience. Hence, I found their interview to be quite complicated to analyze for their distinct perspectives. After months of trying to decipher the particulars of their individual voices, I decided to pull their voices apart, into separate dialogs. I was curious to see what would happen – mainly if their individual voices would stand alone and then become clearer to me on the page. Surprisingly, they did.

In their scene, Ethel and Janie began their school memories with their walk to school. Taken together, their voices agree that the walk to school was an "every day," laborious routine. Separately, they discuss this routine in nuanced ways that deserves individual attention. While Ethel's version foregrounds and illustrates the labor Black children experienced on their way to school, Janie's version emphasizes feelings and sensations associated with their labored experience.

I open the scene with Figure 21 which provides an excerpt from my oral history interview with Ethel and Janie Bell. The left column of the table documents their dialog in its entirety at the selected point in the interview. . Janie Bell's voice is captured in blue text so that the reader might see her nuanced, supportive emphasis within the broader text. To further illustrate these nuanced differences, I have extrapolated, in the right column, Janie Bell's contributions from the focal dialogue (See Figure 21, Janie Bell's Extracted Contributions). Her words are presented in poetic form to highlight her emphasis on the felt experience of trekking to school. As previously stated, I will analyze Ethel's and Janie Bell's interview data in separate scenes below.

Figure 21 Excerpt #1 of Ethel and Janie Bell's Interview Data

Ethel and Janie Bell's Excerpted Dialogue	*: Janie Bell's* Extracted Contributions in Poetic Form
Janie: We walked from ... we- we walked to school every day. **Ethel: I went to from the first to the third grade.** *Janie: Mmm-hmm [affirmative].* **Ethel: And we walked every morning. That was a lonnnnnnngest [crosstalk].** *Janie: We walked to school every day.* **Ethel: What- what is it, a mile or two miles over there?** *Janie: Yeah.* **Ethel: Because we came from that- Do you know where St. John's Church is? Um, well, then, where- where Mr. Williams lived in that old white- big white house that down [crosstalk]-** *Janie: Uhhhhhh-huh.* **Ethel: Well, we was a little farther past that. From that distance, alllll the way up here. Every morning.** *Janie: I walked over a mile, because you-*	*We walked from- we-* *we walked to school-* *every day.* *Mmm-hmmm.* *We walk to school* *every day.* *Yeah* *Uhhh-huh,* *I walked over a mile, because you-*

Ethel: And you walked over-	
Janie: [were] staying there, near Mr. William.	*[were] staying there, near Mr. William.*
Ethel: Yeah.	
Janie: You staying there, we had to walk to school every day.	*You staying there,* *we had to walk to school* *every day.*
Ethel: They would come up to that house and call me to come, and they said every morning, "Come on Ethelllllllll!" [High pitch, child voice] (Laughs) Because I was literally in- and- and my ma was sitting me up there with them, and I would be soooooo afraid to pass by this one house that had a dog. I was so afraid. But every day we walked up here.	
Janie: And it would be soooooo cold, we'd get down here aching.	*And it would be soooooo cold,* *we'd get down here aching.*
Ethel: And It's a llllllot of us in that road then. I would- when I say they, these are my cousins.	
Janie: Yeah, we friends close.	*Yeah, we friends; close.*
Ethel: Janie Bell and all her sisters and brothers. And plus [emphasis] there were children that lived farther down the road from us.	
Janie: All the McClung chilren' and the Hinton's [mentions other families]. we had- we had to walk to school. We did.	*All the McClung chilren'* *and the Hinton's.* *we had-* *we had to walk*
Ethel: Yeah, they was a little back, two miles from where I lived, so they had to walk all the way up here.	
Janie: [crosstalk 00:03:28] we had- we had to walk to school. We did.	*to school. We did.*
Ethel: There was no buses that- to bring us here, because they said we were too close to the- the school, see? So buses would go all the way up to Pickens County instead of bringing us. So we had to get here by- by walking.	*We had- we had* *to walk to school.* *We did.*
Janie: So we walked. Just sisters and brothers.	*So, we walked.*
Ethel: Well-	*Just sisters and brothers.*
Janie: Just the sisters and brothers.	*Just the sisters and brothers.*
Ethel: They had the older children for the younger children.	
Janie: Okay.	*Okay.*
Ethel: Because I was younger than them, that's why they would be calling me to come on. (tickled)	
Janie: Right.	*Right.*
Ethel: Right. And went out to- They kinda watch us, watch out for us, as we came up the highway. So whichever way we dis-came. Yeah, and then drop us back at our own spot, and then we go home by ourselves.	
Janie: Sure did, we had to walk every day. 'Till we got to seventh grade, we went to Pickens County Training School. No, we had to walk to school.	*Sure did,* *we had to walk* *every* *day.*
Ethel: So yeah, that was it, and then we would walk up here, and then we would get to our rooms and to our classroom. But I had- my teacher- my first teacher was Miss Ann. I loved that lady. She was sweet.	*'Till we got to seventh grade,* *until we went to Pickens County Training School.* *No, we had to walk to school.*

Scene II: "From That Distance, All The Way Up Here. Every Morning."

Ethel Grice

Ethel's scene provides a window into the labor children endured getting to school each day. Her scene illustrates how once-children routinely labored through distance, time, and weather to get to school. First, Ethel maintains her walk to school was a routine experience. She explained the laborious nature of the routine as she described the repetitive activities of the trek. The routine was "first to the third grade" which indicated the passing of years. The routine was "walked every morning" meaning that this physical walking over years never let up. As Ethel stated, it was every morning, across years (i.e., from the first to the third grade).

The labor of the trek also involved distance. This was a laborious experience as Ethel felt the trek in her body as she repeatedly walked for long stretches. She recalled the distances she walked as "the lonnnnnnnngest" walk. She also estimated that the walk was "a mile or two miles." As a youngster between six and nine years of age, her small legs would have felt the strain of walking such distances. As Ethel described the miles, she walked via her recollection of waypoints she passed along the journey, she illustrated how she felt labored upon. She mentioned passing "St. John's Church" which she used as a measure of how far she had to walk as her walk had begun "a little farther past that. From that distance, allll the way up there." She reiterates the intensity of the labor by repeating "every morning" – reminding me that this had not been a one-time exercise. The intense repetitive nature of this daily trek suggests that this routine was more suited for adult bodies which were better built for such physical burdens.

She further tried to illustrate the difficulty of her walk by attempting to pull me into a *thought picture*[237] of her walk. As she remembered her trek past waypoints across the landscape, she specifically asked me if I knew the location of the places; St. John's Church and Mr. Willie's old white house. This was an invitation for me to tangibly envision her laborious trek. As an outsider, I was unfamiliar with the waypoints she mentioned. Nevertheless, Ethel went on to describe her experience having walked miles to and from school in detail. Although I was not familiar with the locations, through her description rich with tone, and inflection, I visualized the girls having felt labored as they walked quite a distance only to have reached the first waypoint (possibly St. John's Church) and still having had a long way to go because they had not yet come to the old white house. In short, walking great distances, they felt physically strained.

When the girls did get to the white house in Ethel's memory, she faced danger and felt fear. She had to pass by a frightening dog. Ethel told the story as if she were still gripped by the possibility of this dog catching up with her. She hunched her shoulders, squeezed her eyes, and elongated her words as she remarked "I was soooooo afraid to pass by … the house that had a dog." She repeated her fear again "I was soooo afraid." Not only did Ethel mention she was afraid to pass by the dog, but she also mentioned she was afraid to "pass by the house that had the dog." Her description, tone and physical reaction to her memory jarred my own vision of Ethel as a little girl who prepared her body and her fears to hurry across as she got to the edge of the area where the dog lived. Although the area was probably a distance from the road,[238] as a

[237] Morrison, "Beloved. 1987."

[238] During my summers in Pickens, I did not observe any homes sitting right on the road. Homes were situated far back from the road.

fearful child, Ethel felt exposed and assailable as she imagined the dog could break free and charge towards her.

Through her remembrances of experiencing fear of the house and its dog, Ethel recalled she was not alone. She had comrades who offered her a sense of protection on the walk. Her mother entrusted her to "the older ones" (i.e., older children who were her cousins). She remembers, "my mother sent me up there" with them. It would be the presence of older peers that helped Ethel confront fears she faced along the journey to school like the dog she passed routinely**.** Her cousins would call out *"Come on Ethelllllll"* coaching her to run from one end of the area to the other end, where she would meet up with the larger group of kids/ big cousins. This illustrates Black children felt an increased sense of safety and agency when paired with groups of peers who could provide support and motivate them to push through.

As a young girl, Ethel's experience toiling great distances of a mile or two, past waypoints, over time to get to school revealed her innocence and vulnerability as a child as she experienced labor through distance, time, and fears. While the time and distance may not have been very long by adult standards, for a child the routine (i.e., every day, years, every morning), distance (i.e., miles, waypoints, sensations of "lonnnnnnng") and potential dangers of the walk (i.e., dog and the dog's house) were taxing. Her young body felt labored in the length of time and the distance it took to get to school every day foregrounding the frailty of her body as a child. Her vulnerability and innocence were also apparent in her fear as she felt exposed and assailable having had to pass a dog each day. Furthermore, her fear also represented her innocence as it manifested in a childlike manner. Specifically, her fear was all consuming as she was not only afraid of passing the dog, but also the house in which the dog lived. As a child, she felt complete

vulnerability to the dog and its entire orbit. She didn't want to pass by any of it. She felt vulnerable to all of it.

Ethel's (and Janie) presence as vulnerable actors on the path to school foregrounded their need for protection and support and also children's agency to provide these supports for one another (sometimes at the command of adults). Specifically, Ethel's account shows the adults imagined the children as agentic as the adults paired the younger children with older children to create a peer support system to get to school. The older children were assigned (and trusted) to escort the younger children on the path. With no bus to transport the elementary children, Ethel's account reveals how children became a part of the organization of getting to school.

Finally, Black children were successful at having moved ahead. The children's successful efforts to routinely trek to school in the midst of labored conditions evidenced their her agency. In the first instance, Black children routinely kept going. They were knowledgeable of the route and pushed their bodies to tackle the route. For example, as Ethel described her navigation of waypoints on the journey she evidenced directional knowledge. She knew the route, in part by having tracked on the waypoints (i.e., house, church) she would pass by each day. Also, her descriptions of having "walked" "long" and "miles" provides evidence that she physically pushed her body to trek the landscape.

Ethel's account illustrates Black children's labored efforts to get to school through physicality, distance, time, and perseverance. Ethel's agency to persevere did not eclipse her vulnerability or her need for help. Ethel received help through every day systems where adults paired her with older children who served a supportive and protective presence along the way to the schoolhouse. Although Black children successfully walked to school daily, they still

experienced the walk in labored ways that marked their childhood status. In the next scene, Janie Bell provides a deeper sense of what the labored walk felt like, as children trekked along.

Scene III: "And it Was Every Day"

Janie Bell Curry-Sherrod

Janie Bell's scene, she foregrounded the feelings and sensations of labor children felt walking to school by adding lyrical, and rhythmic emphasis to almost everything Ethel says. In the interview, she is a sort of 'hype-(wo)man"[239] adding a metaphoric energy or exclamation point to Ethel's accounting of their trek. Hence, the tempo and word choices Janie weaves in her extracted account shapes a scene relayed in poetics rather than a straightforward dialog. As words are repeated, nipped, elongated, and often expressed in present tense, Janie Bell shaped a rememory that provided me with a thought picture. Essentially, through her expressive talk, she invited me into her experience as if it were an artifact collected, remembered, and lyrically shared. She walked me into her rememory – a historical now – that is still with her, and like a poem it holds a translation that has both literal and figurative translation. In a literal sense, she described the labor children endured as they walked to school. Figuratively, she illustrated how the walk felt for her and her comrades by adding emphasis to nearly all of Ethel's comments which I discuss below.

Before I offer an analysis of Janie Bell's account, I review how the reader is to understand her poem. As previously stated, to capture the lyrical nature of Janie Bell's telling, I have chosen to display her transcript data in poetic form (See Figure 21). While the data is written as a poem,

[239] "A hype man, in hip hop music and rapping, is a backup rapper and/or singer who supports the primary rappers with exclamations and interjections and who attempts to increase the audience's excitement +… ."Retrieved from

the words, tense, and inflections are all as expressed by Janie Bell. Brackets are used to indicate words that I added for clarity. Short dashes denote breaks in speech when Janie's thoughts seemed to move faster than her verbalized articulations causing breaks in her thought and speech. Recall, the full interview data is on the left of (Figure 21) and includes both Janie Bell and Ethel's voices. Janie Bell begun her story with their walk to school. I have included an identical copy of Janie and Ethel's scene below for the convenience of the reader.

Figure 22 Extended Excerpt from Ethel and Janie Bell's Oral History Interview

Ethel and Janie Bell's Interview data	*Janie Bell's* Contributions in poetic form
Janie: We walked from ... we- we walked to school every day. **Ethel: I went to from the first to the third grade.** *Janie: Mmm-hmm [affirmative].* **Ethel: And we walked every morning. That was a lonnnnnnngest [crosstalk].** *Janie: We walked to school every day.* **Ethel: What- what is it, a mile or two miles over there?** *Janie: Yeah.* **Ethel: Because we came from that- Do you know where St. John's Church is? Um, well, then, where- where Mr. Williams lived in that old white- big white house that down [crosstalk]-** *Janie: Uhhhhhh-huh*. **Ethel: Well, we was a little farther past that. From that distance, alllll the way up here. Every morning.** *Janie: I walked over a mile, because you-* **Ethel: And you walked over-** *Janie: [were] staying there, near Mr. William.* **Ethel: Yeah.** *Janie: You staying there, we had to walk to school every day.* **Ethel: They would come up to that house and call me to come, and they said every morning, "Come on Ethellllllll!" [High pitch, child voice] (Laughs) Because I was literally in- and- and my ma was sitting me up there with them, and I would be soooooo afraid to pass by this one house that had a dog. I was so afraid. But every day we walked up here.** *Janie: And it would be soooooo cold, we'd get down here*	*We walked from- we-* *we walked to school-* *every day.* *Mmm-hmmm..* *We walk to school* *every day.* *Yeah* *Uhhh-huh,* *I walked over a mile, because you-* *[were] staying there, near Mr. William.* *You staying there,* *we had to walk to school* *every day.* *And it would be soooooo cold,* *we'd get down here aching.*

aching. **Ethel: And It's a lllllot of us in that road then. I would- when I say they, these are my cousins.** *Janie: Yeah, we friends close*. **Ethel: Janie Bell and all her sisters and brothers. And plus [emphasis] there were children that lived farther down the road from us.** *Janie: All the McClung chilren' and the Hinton's [mentions other families]. we had- we had to walk to school. We did.* **Ethel: Yeah, they was a little back, two miles from where I lived, so they had to walk all the way up here.** *Janie: [crosstalk 00:03:28] we had- we had to walk to school. We did.* **Ethel: There was no buses that- to bring us here, because they said we were too close to the- the school, see? So buses would go all the way up to Pickens County instead of bringing us. So we had to get here by- by walking**. *Janie: So we walked. Just sisters and brothers.* **Ethel: Well-** *Janie: Just the sisters and brothers.* **Ethel: They had the older children for the younger children.** *Janie: Okay.* **Ethel: Because I was younger than them, that's why they would be calling me to come on. (tickled)** *Janie: Right*. **Ethel: Right. And went out to- They kinda watch us, watch out for us, as we came up the highway. So whichever way we dis- came. Yeah, and then drop us back at our own spot, and then we go home by ourselves.** *Janie: Sure did, we had to walk every day. 'Till we got to seventh grade, we went to Pickens County Training School. No, we had to walk to school.* **Ethel: So yeah, that was it, and then we would walk up here, and then we would get to our rooms and to our classroom. But I had- my teacher- my first teacher was Miss Ann. I loved that lady. She was sweet.**	*Yeah, we friends; close.* *All the McClung chilren'* *and the Hinton's.* *we had-* *we had to walk* *to school. We did.* *We had- we had* *to walk to school.* *We did.* *So, we walked.* *Just sisters and brothers.* *Just the sisters and brothers.* *Okay.* *Right.* *Sure did,* *we had to walk* *every* *day.* *'Till we got to seventh grade,* *until we went to Pickens County Training School.* *No, we had to walk to school.*

Like Ethel, Janie Bell's scene begins with a memory of her walk to school. Her memory expressed a routine labored physicality through sensations expressed in past and present tense which creates a sense of motion. First, Janie Bell describes the children both "walked" and "walk." Ethel, (who sat with us in the interview) "is stay*ing* there" in her childhood home although she no longer occupied that place. As she described she and her peers walking in both

past and present terms, I felt a thought picture emerge of her once-child suspended in motion, active in the past still physically trekking to school.

A sense of motion, active in the past, was also felt in the beat (i.e., meter) of Janie Bell's words. The beat of her words, which were choppy at times, mimicked a marching rhythm. For example, in the first stanza, the beats within her words form a rhythm likened to a childhood march of "*hup-2-3-4.*"[240]:

We/ walked/ from-/ We-/	(4 beats)
We/ walked/ to/ School/	(4 beats)
E/ver/y/ day	(4 beats)
Mmm—/hmmm./	(2 beats; a refrain[241])
We/ walk/ to/ school.	(4 beats and present tense)

As Janie described her walk to school, the rhythm of her words were short and active. Figuratively her short, active, rhythmic words provided the sensation of marching reminiscent of childish movements. Also, the sensation of marching was not stagnant in the past, it was moving to a beat with repetitive words representative of the past and present – they both "walked" and "walk." This sensation of infinite walking evoked a repetitive motion, stuck in time, that not only illustrated she walked every day, but through rhythm, embodied the labored monotony associated with routine and childlike movement of young bodies. As the sensation of monotony was felt in the rhythm, the labor associated with youthful bodies routinely walking becomes more apparent.

[240] To hear how this might sound, see The Jungle Book "Kolonel Hathi's March" https://youtu.be/_kl0-C_AE_8?t=85

[241] In poetry, a refrain is a word that is repeated – usually at the end of a stanza. Throughout Janie's dialog, she repeats one or two-word statements at the end of stanzas. These words are "Mm-hmmm," "I did.", "Every Day", "Uhhhhhh-huh.", "Okay", and "Right".

Her repetitive use of words also suggests the routine and physical nature of getting to school. For example, she repeats the word ‘walked’ 11 times and ‘every day’ 5 times throughout the small scene. The term walked, often expressed as collective group walking together, cuts across phrases of ‘we walked from,’ ‘we walked to …’ or ‘we had to walk.’ These phrases (i.e., walked to/from) illustrate labor embodied in a back-and-forth movement that parallels the marching rhythm of the beats in the text. The sensation of physicality is increased when Janie Bell shares that these routine walks were mandatory (i.e., 'we *had to walk'*) and sometimes they would arrive to the school door "aching and soooooooo cold."

The sensation of physicality and routine associated with walking to school is further intensified with her repetition of the term 'every day' as a kind of punctuation – an exclamation point that ended all sentences (except for two). These repetitive exclamations of "every day" further stressed a sense of physical labor associated with the *routine of* getting to school. Labor was a routine walking *from,* walking *to,* walking *a mile,* and the walking was *every day*.

Janie Bell's descriptions also expressed labor through emphasis as she punctuated Ethel's descriptions of the distances children traveled. Like Ethel, she too associated her recollections of distances traveled with sparsely situated structures or waypoints. Recall, in Ethel's scene she indicated as children passed waypoints, walked "from there" to school, children physically felt the labor of distance. Both Janie and Ethel described the distance, but Janie added emphasis to most of Ethel's accounts. As previously stated, this was reminiscent of a 1980's Hip-Hop "hype-man" – or in this case hype-(wo)man. The hype-(wo)man is a sort of backup singer/rapper who adds emphasis to the main account with exclamations and interjections to increase the audience's excitement. In the interview, I was the audience and Janie, and Ethel (together but in different ways) tried to help me *feel* the weight of the labor they experienced. In doing so, Janie Bell

became Ethel's hype-(wo)man, backing up all her statements with emphasis that underscored the walk was serious business – it was laborious. For example:

Ethel says:	**"And we walked every morning, that was a lonnnnnng walk,"**
Janie adds emphasis:	"**We *walked***." [Her voice deepens and adds emphasis on the word *walked*] to school every day [again emphasis on every day]
Ethel chimes in with a question:	**"What was it, a mile or two miles over there?**
Janie Bell chimed in with a definitive:	"**Yeah!**" [her brief one-word supported word delivered a definitive stance which affirmed the excessive distance and her tone marked intensity of emotion associated with having had to trek long distances.

Janie Bell's emphasis added drama in the figurative sense and underscored the labor involved in the literal walking of miles. Her emphasis (in word and tone) signaled that I – the interviewer – was not to overlook the distance they described nor the associated feelings of labor. It was laborious; they walked it, and they felt it.

Furthermore, later in her recollection of walking to school, Janie Bell emphasized the comradery she felt along the way. While Ethel mentioned the presence of other children through the protection of her older cousins, Janie's statement (in the present tense), "<u>we</u> close friends," signaled comradery through feelings of close friendship. She and her *close friends* walked and "are walking." When Ethel added, "And It's a lllllllot of us in that road then…" Janie Bell further identified the close friends as she named them: The "McClungs," "the Hinton's," " the sisters and the brothers." While Ethel indicated there was a crowd of children on the road – some of whom were her cousins – Janie Bell deepened the memory and further humanized the children as she backed up Ethel's statement with identifiers. She names the crowd by making the relationship between the children explicit (i.e., friends and siblings) and by naming groups within the group

by their family names (i.e., the McClung children, the Hinton's). By naming the children's relation to one another and identifying family names, Janie Bell provides a bit of depth to who the Black children were on the road. They are no longer no-named children who labored to school, they are close friends, they are family, and they have names. Taken together, Janie and Ethel provide a sense of comradery among children who were both family and friends trekking along to school together.

Janie Bell's lyrical and rhythmic style of voicing her remembrances with regard to her comrades and her labored walk to school aids in the imagining of Black children's innocence and vulnerability as they trekked forward. The sensation of the children's physicality and routine is captured in her telling through variations in tense that embodied ongoing movement in past and present; word repetition that embodied physical movement; and word emphasis following Ethel's statements that imbued a sense of drama related to labor involved in distances the children walked. Furthermore, she added emphasis to the children's humanity by explicitly naming their relationship to one another as well as stating their family names. Janie Bell's account humanizes the labored presence of Black children as they walked to school and their ability to weather with the support of peers and family demands that did not honor their status as children. In the next scene, John Jr. (a.k.a. Juney Bug) illustrates how Black children labored through weather on the road to school.

Scene IV: "What I Call… I Wade in the Water"

John Wilkins Jr. (a.k.a. Juney Bug)[242]

[242] John Jr. started school at Pickensville Elementary in 1937.

Like Janie and Ethel, John Jr. began by confirming that he too experienced the routine labor of walking miles on the journey to school. John Jr. (a.k.a. Juney Bug) disclosed in 1937, at approximately eight years of age, he was recruited to start school by Mr. Locke, a neighbor, and older cousin who he helped farm. Juney Bug recalled he was reluctant to start school. He wanted to extend his childhood freedoms to "stay home, play, and rabbit hunt." Also, he wasn't quite ready for school. He didn't have school clothing. So that he could attend, his mother mended two pair of pants and he was able to get one pair of shoes. In his memory, he is now on the journey to school with the other children. He recalled having navigated the constraints of land and weather to get to the schoolhouse. Through his experiences we are provided a deeper sense of how children labored to navigate the weather and the unforgiving nature of the terrain which was not designed with children in mind. He asserted despite the constraints and dangers of mud holes, wagon holes, and everything else the children may have encountered– he maintained that the children "did it."

> We-we walked to school, which, uh, two-and-a-half, three miles. Mud holes and wagon holes and all, you know. I'd go to school every day I could. And I took what a call... I wade in water. We wade in water five miles. Before we had to go, we wade water... Rust from the wagon, rust, and no built road. It was just field and things. And working farm fields. We just got wagon roads.[243] We'd waaaaade in water. Up on the hill. I had a little four-dollar shoes on, it wasn't gonna take it long before they'll be flappy. Cause you get home- Daddy had to take some sack

243 [Mary: 00:21:13] The statement, "We just got wagon roads" was made by once-child, Mary (Locke) Fuseyamore. Mary sat in on my interview with Mr. John Jr. Through snowballing, Mary introduced me to John Jr. He was more comfortable interviewing with Mary being a part of the process. Mary is the daughter of Mr. Locke, John Jr.'s beloved mentor.

> thread and get your foot out em and dry em and sew em again. Thought a four-dollar pair of shoes wasn't gonna last long with that- you know, but what we want... All our people doing the best they could. The *best* they could. I think in Pickensville they had three stores then- And, uh, Daddy took my shoes and put a' old pair of boots and fixed and patched em up good with some thick thread and told me, said, *"Now you gotta start darting some of that water. Water- you gonna have to wade... Wade you go around it*," and I started doing that. They lasted a little long. I thought everything last long when they started talking to me, and I start obeying 'em. I wasn't hard-headed. I really wasn't. I loved Mom and Dad too hard to be hard-headed.

John Jr. described how he labored and leveraged his agency to make the trek. He had to move his own body across the harsh terrain. His description reveals he had to physically meet the constraints of the road head on. His memories of facing the road revealed the trouble he encountered keeping his shoes dry, the physical and intellectual support he received to mend and care for his shoes, and his ability to turn the care and knowledge he received into action – ultimately persisting to school.

First, John Jr. described the constraints he was met with on the road to school. The path was not designed for children, but rather "just …wagon roads." It was a space intended to support transit associated with adult labor – "farming" and "fieldwork." Given that this was a road for labor and not children, the road posed constraints and made his trek rough. To get to school, he had to do more than just walk the road: he had to tackle it. John Jr.'s description illuminates how he felt and experienced tackling the space. It was John Jr. and his "four-dollar shoes" against miles, mud, wet, holes, and rust.

John Jr.'s efforts to meet the constraints of the road were best illustrated through the material of his childhood – particularly, his shoes. His shoes represent both constraint he faced as a child and agency he expressed as a child. As John Jr. made his trek to school, he needed those shoes to protect his feet, but he found his "four-dollar" shoes were no match for the elements – "they'd soon be flappy." Together, his physical efforts and the frailty of his shoes reveal the tensions he experienced as a child, trying to navigate the terrain and being vulnerable to it. He was able to walk to school, and even cross rugged earth, but he needed the support of his shoes. His shoes did not have adequate material to protect and support his feet for the journey. While Juney Bug was able to make his way to school "every day [he] could," his shoes fell apart.

Juney Bugs inability to keep his shoes dry, provides a window into the naiveté he embodied as he moved across the wet ground. His account of his shoes becoming “flappy” provides a vision of a naïve boy, traipsing through puddles of water – playful, carefree, and unconcerned with getting his feet wet, and unaware that the water would ruin his shoes. Prior to his father’s intervention, Juney Bug was free in his youthful unknowingness, getting those shoes so wet that the bottoms gave way and had to be fixed. But given Juney Bug had to get to school on his own, with no transportation, he would have to learn to preserve his shoes to protect his own feet.

John Jr. speaks as if, as a child, he understood figuratively his shoes represented his labor and the labor of his people. He knew his resources were limited – he had owned one pair of shoes. He also shared he knew his parents were not educated – they had not been able to finish the road to school themselves. It was difficult to get an education. He shared:

> It- it- it- it- it- it was hard. It was hard to get education out here. Like this. Now lemme show you what was going on. My mother didn't have no

> education. Maybe she could read just a little bit, see some letters and know what it was. My daddy didn't have no education. Well now, was... Wasn't nobody in the house to lead- lead to no education. All... My momma was strong enough with the Lord. I can hear her praying and always call my name.

And of his father, Juney Bug shared:

> And just like I said a while ago, wasn't nothing short of our daddy, a little old kind man, good little man but he just had never had no chance to get no education. He didn't know nothing.
> … he was born on the plantation.
> There was a man between him called John Diglone and he were born on there and all, all he done, he had a whole bunch of people down there.
> Well, he didn't believe in black folks knowing nothing.
> But how to put the plow and the gill on the mule and how to cut a ditch bank, you know.
> You couldn't go to school until you picked all of the cotton out the field.
> And he was that kind of like, you know.
> So it was share- like a share cropping situation.
> The name of it was share cropping.

Juney Bug seemed to be knowledgeable of his parents' oppression and educational struggles. He understood it was not easy to get an education locked in the bondage of sharecropping. Despite his parents struggles, he also understood they had hope for him as evidenced by his mother always calling his name in her prayers. The educational condition of his family alongside the hope they held for Juney Bug filled him with some understanding that he had to keep going. And so, his shoes, despite their shortcomings, or constraints these shortcomings posed, would have to help him meet the road, trek it, and get to school.

But, as a child, John Jr. was not alone. Amid constraints he experienced on the walk to school, he also experienced a portal forward. His father mended his shoes and gave him advice that would strengthen his agency to continue forward to school. Juney Bug’s description of his

father's delicate and precise approach as he mended his shoes illustrated and embodied the everyday resistance and care Juney Bugg experienced. First, his dad, John Sr., goes through several stages to mend the shoes. His father repurposed an “old pair of boots;” “fixed them,” “patched them up good” with “thick thread.” John Jr.’s tone paralleled his observation of the attention to detail his father employed while he fixed his shoes. His tone and description revealed how as a once-child, John Jr. could see and feel his father’s support and related this support to maximum effort. John Jr. interpreted father's efforts to fix his shoes as he told me, "all our people doing the best they could… the best they could." As a child, John Jr. recalled although resources were few and context constrained**,** effort and care of his father (and his people) were maximum. With this support and care, Juney Bugs efforts could be maximum too.

Second, John Jr.'s father instructed him to "dart" the water and to "wade" the water, essentially finding ways through and around the turbulent ground with minimal damage to his shoes. John Jr. understood this. He would have to avoid the water, while at the same time walking over it. John Jr. also recalled interpreting his father's advice as a kind of operation which he called, "I waaaaaade in the water." His father's reference to “wade in the water” recalled the historical negro spiritual, "Wade in the Water." John Jr. described his experience by paralleling his father's message with the message of this song. The song's metaphor is associated with the labor of navigating the constraints (i.e., rough 'waters') of life. Historic interpretations of the song references themes of escaping bondage and contemporary usages embody similar messages of persistence through and across troubled lands. John Jr. received his father's advice to wade the water as both literal and figurative.

In a literal sense, the spiritual, first published by Fisk Jubilee Singers in 1901, was used by Harriet Tubman to "tell escaping slaves to get off the trail and into the water"[244] to escape slave catchers and their hunting dogs. In this sense, the slaves were to go to the water to escape treachery on the land. But too, the song offers a metaphoric meaning. Handed down from slavery, and embedded in Black spirituality, where 'the water' is understood to be life itself, while 'troubled' refers to constraints as experienced in the jaws of racial bondage. Juney Bug understood the educational 'troubles' of his parents as they had not been able to complete school and had limited ability to read or write. He also understood his parents doing their best given the larger constraints brought on by life in the shadow of Jim Crow. What is significant about John Jr.'s mention of this spiritual and the song's association with his own journey to school is the song's direct reference to laboring children. For example, the lyrics begin:

Chorus: Wade in the Water, wade in the water children.
Wade in the Water. God's gonna trouble the water.
Who are those children all dressed in Blue?
God's gonna trouble the water.
Must be the ones that made it through.
God's gonna trouble the water.
Chorus: Wade in the Water, wade in the water children.
Wade in the Water. God's gonna trouble the water.

John Jr. aligns himself as a boy with the "children" in the song. Like the children in the song, John Jr. would have to navigate troubled waters – which like acts of God, were circumstances much bigger than a lone child. Juney Bug's understanding of the message – what it meant to

[244] Jeffrey W Sheehan, "Wade In the Water: African American Sacred Music Traditions [Vol. 1, African American Spirituals: The Concert Tradition, Vol. 2, African American Congregational Singing: Nineteenth-Century Roots, Vol. 3, African American Gospel: The Pioneering Composers, Vol. 4, African American Community Gospel]," 2004.

“wade in the water,” gifted to him by his father, is two-fold. First, in a literal sense, he would have to use the agency of his own body and knowledge to "make it through" and get to school despite the weather and the frailty of his shoes.

Figuratively, he would have to have some consciousness of the 'spirit' for his endeavor. John Jr. was going to school – a place his ancestors and his parents had not been able to go or to fully realize. He would have to fuel his agency, in part with his historical understandings of how difficult it was for Black people to get educated. Despite troubles ‘children’ might encounter along the path to school, Juney Bug interpreted his father’s evocation of the song as a call for him to ignite his own agency – body, knowledge, and soul – to continue ahead, further than his ancestors or his parents had been able to go on the path to education.

In the previous scene, Ethel and Janie Bell illustrated their innocence and vulnerability as they navigated the routine labor of distance, physically walking and fear. Also, they showed they experienced support and friendship from older peers. John Jr.'s trek to school illustrated a comparable naiveté, and vulnerability. Consider his innocence and naivete in not avoiding the wet ground on his own. His vulnerability is evident as we witness his shoes quickly fall apart (i.e., "soon they'd be flappy"), and his inability to fix his own shoes. He had to depend on his father.

Juney Bugs experience with his shoes also embodied the historical knowledge Black children held as they went to school. As he stated, he understood his parents were not educated, and that it was very hard to get an education because of race. John Jr. also explained to me that he too experienced similar difficulties. Specifically, he shared the white man he worked for as a child didn't want him to have an education and preferred to see him "[w]ith nothing. He didn't even want to see me with a chain around my neck. Let alone no shoes, no clothes. He wanted

you to always be a pig-pen." These knowledges illustrated how racial and economic oppression denied Black children freedoms of naiveté or unknowingness which would be otherwise associated with childhood. Juney Bug had to know.

Although, as a child, he possessed a knowing about his conditions, his understanding of how to navigate his conditions was not deeply known – as a child he still possese an innocence – a gap of knowledge – that needed to be validated, supported, and filled. His knowing was underwritten by his father with the tools (i.e., mending the shoes), strategies (i.e., advice on how preserve his shoes), and motivation rooted in encouraging advice and care helped him walk more strategically. Furthermore, Juney Bug evidences his own agency to follow his father's message. He recalled his agency was rooted in his "hard love" for his parents.

Juney Bug illustrates a Black child's naïve efforts to navigate harsh conditions, his knowledge of familial historical oppression which provides him some sense of the significance of his persistence on the trek to school. Also, his scene reveals his experience of his father's validation and response to his need for care parallel with his father's support of his agency to tackle the labored conditions he had to face on the road to school. In the next scene, Mary illustrates how she too received physical support and protection as she traveled to school -- first from her father and later from her brother.

Scene V: "Woods! Woods! Woods!"

Mary "Baby Girl" Fuseyamore[245]

Mary's memory traveled back to the mid 1940s when she recalled having felt protected as she faced the every day labor of crossing rugged lands and inclement weather to get to school.

245 Mary started Pickensville Elementary School in 1943.

Her narrative illustrates that she felt small and defenseless amid its vastness and potential dangers of the natural world loomed around her on the trek. As her Dad's "baby girl," her father thought she was “not old enough” to make her way to school on her own. Instead, she was escorted to school, first by her father and then by her brother, until she was older and perceived as capable of navigating the walk to school on her own. Her remembrances illustrate the constraints the woods presented and provide a window into how she navigated a way forward in light of a the protections and supports provided by her father and her brother (who was also in school), and also her own body and agency once she “got big.”

> Well, first, let me tell you how I got, well, we, we’ll get back to Rosenwald. But um, this is how they protected me too. Uh, when the time come when I get old enough to go to school, I didn't have to walk to school until I got big. When I say big, I was about ... 9, 10 years old. Maybe older. … Because there was a lotta nothing but woods, woods, woods to get to this school from our house. And my dad would not allow me to walk through those woods even though I had brothers.
>
> My dad used to ride me to school on the horse. But my dad, we had a horse, a white horse called Stella. My dad fling me up on the back of the horse (Laughs) I'd straddle the horse behind him and bounce! Bounce! Bounce!
>
> This thing is bouncing, and it hurts. But my dad use to ride me to school on the back of the horse- until they felt I was of the age where I could walk on my own and follow the bigger boys 'cause they were both boys. It was all boys.
>
> The only time they might not have walked, we use to have a lot of flooding over there and rain because of the way- that's something I'm gonna go back to it too.

> Um, the way the, the, the, the land is shaped, it's like hilly and little valleys. And there's ditches. My dad built a- a bridge there with planks over behind my grandmother's house.[246] There was next to no neighbors. And when it rained, um, my dad would cross everybody on the horse, the boys, everybody. Everybody would have to cross. By the time we got home in the evening, the water was down maybe, and you could get across. Or he would hook up the wagon and take everybody on the wagon. He got us to school. That's one thing, like I said, he had a 4th grade education. But he believed in- [slight pause] very dearly believed in education.

Mary's memories of "a lotta woods-woods-woods" on the walk to school provides a window into how she felt small and exposed in comparison to her surroundings. As she shares her experience, she imbues a sensation of being engulfed in a big world of nature on path to school. The vastness of the "woods, woods, woods" around her magnifies her age and stature. She had just started elementary school – possibly 5 or 6 years of age. Her body was small in comparison to the trees. At the time of our interview these same trees were still there--the schoolhouse was surrounded by these trees standing at least 100 feet tall, close together, with other trees and foliage that was unfamiliar to me. What was apparent to me was the darkness between the trees. There was no way through it. However, much of the trees between Mary's childhood home and the schoolhouse had been cleared. At the time of our interview there was a dirt and gravel road

246 Mary's grandmother, Dora, was born into slavery and had been enslaved for some time. Mary is unsure of her grandmother's emancipation. The story she was told about her grandmother is centered in the property the family still owns today. Mary tells me when her grandmother was freed, "the white man who owned her" gave her 100 acres of land. Ms. Dora, upon her passing, divided and willed the land to her children – one of whom was Mary's father, Mr. Jim Locke. Today, Mary and her sisters live on the land Ms. Dora willed to their father, who then willed to them. As a child walking to school, Mary knew the history of her grandmother's land and she walked across her grandmother's land every day. She shared with me, "God only knows what my grandmother had to do to get this land."

between her home and the schoolhouse. Hence, as she described the woods she experienced as a child, I was not able to determine whether the “woods-woods-woods” were indeed a forest, but I could imagine – given the trees and the landscape I saw along with her description – that as a little girl, the mass of trees felt like a forest and that she felt very small in comparison. Mary was no match for whatever potential trials and dangers lied within. The "Woods! Woods! Woods!" engulfed Mary and given the opportunity, the 100 ft trees and all that lied within – "flooding," "hilly … little valleys," dangerous animals, poisonous plants, unpredictable terrain, and other imminent dangers -- could have overtaken her like a tsunami. However, her parents validated her vulnerability as a little child. Her father, Mr. Locke, got in front of the woods and tackled land and weather for her – every day. Consequently, Mary felt protected.

Mary holds reverence in her voice when she proclaims, "but, this is how they protected me too." She remembered she never had to face the constraints of the landscape alone. In addition to *feeling vulnerable,* she also describes how she was *seen* as vulnerable – a little child, developmentally "not old enough" to walk to school on her own. She recalls "my dad would not allow me to walk through those woods even though I had brothers."

Mary's older brothers clearly possessed some agency – they walked to school independently. Nevertheless, her brothers were still children and not capable of providing the protection necessary for a "Baby Girl." Mary’s account illustrates that the older boys were more physically able to meet the demands of the terrain, but as children, they were also limited in what they could do to help her. Mary describes how “everybody” experienced escorts on the journey to school (both boys and girls). The boys’ agency did not eclipse their status as children. The boys also needed protection and support, which Mr. Locke provided. During those days, he altered the landscape by navigating land and holding back water through making a make-shift

bridge, putting all the girls and boys in his wagon, or escorting the group to school. He made sure Mary and her comrades safely passed through. Mary felt support and protection within her father's actions to manipulate land, weather, and water. His efforts that signaled respect for her (and other children's) status as children. As a little one, Mary was worthy of protection every day; and he provided.

Second, Mary's description of her experience being escorted to school by her father on "a white horse [named] Stella" evokes and illustrates a fairytale sensation of being protected.. Her description of her little body being "flung up on the back of the horse" provides a window into a little girl, who felt protected in sensations of the weightlessness of her own body as she was flung high onto the seemingly magnificent Stella. In her description of being flung onto the horse, she relays having felt elevated in the power of her father's strength – both his physical strength to toss her about, but also the strength she felt in his desire to protect her. Her father's desire to protect her is embodied his lifting her onto the horse and carried away. Mary's

Figure 23 Bettye Windham and her three big brothers. Betty Windham Warren Collection.

father, his strength, and the white horse, Stella, represent portals of protection and support she felt and experienced as she was elevated above the rough ground. Additionally, in her memory, the magical “white horse Stella” morphs into a “thing” as it was “bouncing and it hurts.” The pain she felt riding Stella was a physical reminder of the constraints of wood-woods-woods thus, she was not completely free from the every day routine of labor on the journey to school.

Overtime, Mary's agency to get to school on her own expanded but not enough where she would face the land herself. As a teenager, she was still viewed as vulnerable to the woods. Her ability to get to school depended on her big brother, Jimmy. He served as her escort and comrade. She explains that by her teen years, she walked to school with Jimmy. They navigated the woods to the bus stop. "And right through elementary school and high school everything, we were just ... like that." [crosses her pointer and middle fingers tight].

Even during Mary’s high school years in which she walked with her brother; her dad still provided supports. For example, once, Mr. Locke felt the duo's walk to the bus stop was not the safest nor the quickest route to the school bus, so he instructed them to switch the route and walk another way.

> He changed when we were supposed to be getting the school bus, we were in high school by then. And ... he told us, "I don't want y'all," … Y'all not gonna take the bus over there anymore 'cause the bus gotta go all the way to Pickensville and make that big turn in Pickensville and head out to the school. And by the time the bus get over there, y'all can walk right across the woods and be right at the bridge for the bus…" which is true. And then he said he didn't like the, the crowd that was hanging around there waiting for the bus, it was a lot of boys over there. It was a lot of boys. And I was 16 [said with scandal in her voice].

Mary's account reveals that as she grew older, her father's concern for her protection stayed steady while *what* he was concerned about shifted. Different from protecting Mary from the "woods woods woods," he now felt he needed to protect her from the older boys who were also waiting for the bus. Mary was a "freshman" at the time, and she explained her father "didn't like the crowd" of boys who were waiting for the bus. She explains that her father never explicitly said he did want her amid the crowd of boy – nevertheless this is how she understood it. She recalls, "[T]hey were boys older than me. And he would not want me over there. No[w], th-that, that I believe with all my heart is why he check me that change. He did not want me over there." Mary's adamancy that her father did not want her around a crowd of older high school boys illustrates his continued consideration of her vulnerability – now as a young girl entering the world of teen boys where boy/girl interactions advance to social interactions that could lead to physical and emotional attraction. Her father's desire to protect Mary in this way also illustrates his perception of and trepidation for her

Figure 24 Mary (Far right) with her brother, Jimmie Jr., and her sister, Susie. Circa 1951. Michelle Locke Fuseyamore Collection.

growing agency to express her independence. Figure 24 provides an in-time view of Mary, her brother Jimmie Jr., and their sister Susie as teens and Pickens County Training School students in the 1950s.

Mary's scene illustrates the experience of being imagined as delicate "baby girl" by an adult – namely her father. His awareness of her innocence and vulnerability to the woods around her fueled the support and protection he provided for her safe passage to school. Within his protection and support, Mary's innocence and vulnerability was apparent in her body – not through her physical labor, like Janie, Ethel, and Juney Bug, but rather her size and age in relation to the sprawling wooded area located between her home and school. Her innocence and vulnerability were highlighted as her small buoyant body was flung onto his horse or as she watched her father move heaven and earth for her (i.e., altering the land with make shift bridges to conquer flooding streams) to get to school.

The scene also demonstrates how Mary experienced her vulnerability and innocence being validated over time. As she grew older and into her teen years her agency increased but she was still viewed as having need of support and protection. Although she had more agency and could walk to the school bus on her own, she would walk with her big brother, Jimmie Jr. It was now his job to protect her. Being paired with her older brother evidences the continued acknowledgement of her vulnerability alongside her increased agency. Although she was indeed older and more agentic; her father did not deem her agentic in adult-like sense. His sense of his daughter's vulnerability continued alongside her growing agency as she developed into teen-hood.

Mary's scene illustrates how her (and other children's) presence – and particularly their perceived innocence and vulnerability on the road to school inspired her father to carry out every

day actions that changed the space previously described by Juney Bug as only for "wagons and rust." In the next scene, Janie Lee is attending elementary school a decade later than Mary and nearly two decades after John Jr. Janie's scene illustrates labor Black children experienced being bused to school alongside supports and protections from caring adults. While John Jr. and Mary experienced the help of their father on a micro, everyday level, Janie Lee's scene shows how children's labored presence on the road to the school bus sparked an adult to advocate for systemic change that completely upheaved the road and changed it to alleviate Black children's every day labor.

Scene VI: "So, the Bus Would Come"

Janie Lee Currington

Not everyone walked to school. Some children were bused -- particularly those attending Pickens County schools after [X year???]. Janie Lee's remembrances of her bus ride to school further illustrate labor through the constraints and portals children experienced on the journey. Although Janie had access to the school bus, when weather turned bad, she still experienced the labor of walking to school. Like other children in the study who were bused to school, Janie Lee and her comrades had to walk to the bus stop. Her description of the walk to the bus stop reveals a rough terrain – particularly in the rain and the cold. It was during these times of inclement weather that the children were unprotected against the elements but supported and protected by adults who stepped in to provide relief from the harsh weather.

> So, the bus would come at a particular pick up time… At a particular place and pick up all the kids in the neighborhood and we did that for yeaaarrrs, sooo, when it was too raining, real cold, my granny or someone in the nay-bor-hood would

driiiiive us and wait for us,[247] so, we had a cousin at the end where the- at the end of the stop and she would allow us to come in the house out of the cold, out of the rain and wait for the bus,

Soooo after three or four years, my granny just got fed up. She was like the captain of the nay-bor-hood, [she had a] fifth grade education, but she knew—how—to—do—things. [Janie says the phrase "knew how to do things." With great emphasis, pronouncing each word as its own sentence].

She said, *"I am tired of this, I am tired of my children staying out in the cold and the rain,"* so she went down to the Board of Education, aaannnnd ah like she was there for maybe a year [dramatic pause] and they gave her sooo much… so… you know, such a hard time [high voice] because they really didn't want the bus to come in our area because the roads was bad.

First of all, she had to go to the road commission. She had to get them to upgrade the roads, and all of this, and after she did this and got petitions for everybody to sign, and they upgraded the roads and maybe 'bout a year and a half after 'goin down practically weekly, [Janie's voice gets lighter and she says each word distinctly as if each word tells its own story] the bus—finally—came—and—picked—everybody—up—at—the—door and we were soooooo happy [dramatic pause]- but we allllllllways got the secondhand bus.[248]

247 Janie Lee. Interview with Author. February, 20, 2015. Detroit, Michigan.

248 Janie Lee Interview with Author. February 20, 2015. Detroit, Michigan. Janie Lee attended Hopewell School 1950s -1960s. Her scene would've have taken place nearly 10 years after John Jr.'s scene "What I call Wade in the Water," and approximately five years after Mary's scene "Woods, Woods, Woods." While all three scenes provide evidence of the different ways adult responded to the vulnerabilities of black children on the trek to school, Mary and John Jr.'s accounts reveal adults efforts to give children knowledge needed to endure the trek (i.e., John Jr.), or

Although Janie Lee was bused to school, like other once-children in the study, she experienced the every day labor of getting to school through distance, time, and inclement weather. She and her comrades walked at least a mile to the bus stop. She had to be knowledgeable of the "particular" location for her pickup. Furthermore, she and her comrades had to be at the bus stop by a "particular time." This would have meant the children also had to manage and navigate time – possibly being more beholden to time than children who walked the entire distance to school. Unlike, for example, Carolene (who will be discussed in Chapter V) who walked to school with her siblings and admits their mismanagement of time which resulted in them sometimes being "late for school," for Janie Lee, missing the bus could have meant missing school altogether. The stakes associated with time were higher. It would have been critical for Janie Lee to be mindful of her navigation of the time and the terrain she had to trod to get to the bus.

The element of time embodied in waiting for the bus becomes laborious with the added discomforts of rain and cold. The young people were laboring under the "rain and cold." Inclement weather had effects on the children's physical experience and their momentum forward to the bus stop. Although Janie Lee doesn't mention particular physical discomfort and pains brought on by the weather, she does indicate the rain and cold sometimes became too much to bear; sometimes it was "too raining, and real cold" which indicates that children felt and endured discomforts in their bodies. Other once-children in the study provide a deeper window into how children felt and endured when the rain and cold became harsh. Recall that Janie Bell (from Janie and Ethel's scene) mentions it would be "sooooooooo cold." During the interview, Janie Bell

adults efforts to transform the land with every day actions (i.e., building a log bridge for children to cross a creek or flooding waters). Janie Lee's account that would have taken place at least a decade later, illustrates adults' efforts to transform the landscape at a systemic level. Taken together, these efforts illustrate children's sustained vulnerabilities on the landscape and adult's constant attention to these vulnerabilities with efforts that increased over time – shifting from efforts to increase the children's agency, to direct actions on the land, to direct actions on the system itself.

would shiver to act out how as a child, she felt the cold "aching" in her bones.[249] In their interview, Billy and Doll indicate "we were cold" and "no one liked being cold."[250] Carolene mentions that her mother made her and her sister wear long knee-high pantyhose to protect their legs from the cold.[251] Willie Howard mentions that after walking home from school, his feet were so pained from the cold that he would take his socks off and warm his feet by the fire. William further evidences the extent of the cold on the body by referencing his memory of the cold beyond the walk to school. Specifically, he remembers the severity of the cold in the mornings before school via the "slop jars" he would gather. Willie recalls:

> The other part of it that, that determine how cold it was is that we had something called potties and we call them slop jars. Slop jars and the urine in those slop jars would freeze and I was small, so I was the one that was required to empty the slop. So, I would take these, these buckets out that had ice in them and I had to get it out. So, I'd have to turn it upside down and hit the bottom then get the urine to come out because it was just a block ice. And that was my chore in the morning before I went to went to school.[252]

Once at school, the same cold that had frozen the slop jar at Willie's home was apparent in once-children's recollection of the cold. They would squish their bodies close together[253] to leverage a

249 Janie & Ethel

250 Billy & Doll

251 Carolene

252 Willie Howard

253 Janie and Ethel

good seat around the classroom's potbelly stove. Deloris illustrates that this cold had to be endured, "[i]n the fourth grade or so, uh, we was, it was cold, and we was all sitting around the pot belly stove, and she asked a question, and then she would go around to each one of us to ask the question, … ."[254] Similarly, Mary Fuseyamore also recalls "huddling," and learning around the stove, "[a]nd I would sit on the first bench. I remember being cold when I would get here [to Pickensville] and we would all have to huddle around the potbelly stove to get warm. While we were waiting for what we called "Devotion… [which] was every morning before classes start."[255] These remembrances, albeit situated outside of the walk to school, further illustrate the intensity of the cold that permeated spaces on either end of the walk to school, namely the home and the schoolhouse. But different than home and school, on the walk children were not guarded by physical supports and protections – they were exposed to the cold and had to endure it.

In addition to recalling how they experienced the weather's bite at home or in the schoolhouse, once-children recall that even the buses were sometimes no match for the weather. The buses were also constrained by the roads. For example, some once-children, like Janie Lee, experienced walking a mile or more to catch the bus because the bus could not travel across the rugged roads. Although she was privileged to ride the bus, she was not free from the labor of walking. Also, once-children who road school buses recall the buses getting stuck in the road, severely delaying, or altogether preventing them from getting to school or home in the evening. Billy, who attended Hopewell School recalls, "You might not get there [to school] until dinner time.", or Anne Petty who remembers bus stalls preventing her from getting home after school in the evening. Unable to get home, she had to spend the night at the home of someone in the

254 Deloris Ransom

255 Mary Fuseyamore

community. Hence, Janie Lee's recollection of things getting "*too rainy and real cold"* illustrates the ways weather exacerbated the physical labor children endured getting to school even if they took the bus.

Although Janie Lee experienced constraints brought on by inclement weather as she walked to the school bus, she also recalls portals forward. For Janie Lee, these openings were embodied in materials, time, and adult action. For example, the cars and homes of the community members became waystations of protection from the cold and the rain as children were invited to wait inside a cousin's home or driven to the bus stop by people in the community (or her grandmother). Without the shelter of neighbors' homes or cars, according to Janie Lee, children would "stand in the rain and the cold." She recalls that the adults would "*wait for us*" rather than leave the children to wait alone in the cold. To be sure that children were safely on the bus, adults sacrificed time from work or other responsibilities. This sacrifice evidenced their assessment that their youth were worthy of protection and reified, in turn, their young people's status as children.

Although it may seem that children were merely present on the road while adults served as actors, the children's presence also served a significant role. It was the vulnerability of children on the road that sparked adult actions to alter the space. Recall, John Jr. described the road to school as a space that had historically made it difficult for Blacks to get an education. Furthermore, the roads were for "*wagons… rust from the wagon …no built road …just field, working farm fields …and [other] things,"* not children. However, children's presence on the road to school required the space to become inclusive of youngsters. Particularly, it was important for children to get to school safely. This is evident through adults' everyday actions to alleviate constraints of the road by manipulating them. Previous scenes have illustrated adults

using logs to create bridges for children to pass over flooded areas and creeks; adults shapeshifted their homes into safehouses that provide shelter and waiting areas (for those who caught the school bus). Additionally, at least one account showed how parents taught their children how to navigate the road to maintain clothing (i.e., shoes).[256]

Janie Lee offers one account which foregrounds an example of the everyday actions adults took to radically transform the road – expanding the space to include considerations of black childhood. Janie Lee recalls her grandmother's stance at the time; she was "fed up." She remembers and mimics the fervor in in grandmother's statement "I'm *[t]ired of this, I am tired of my children staying out in the cold and the rain!"* After working for years with community members to provide children openings on the journey to school, her grandmother intensified her efforts, taking on the Pickens County Board of Education. Essentially, grandma's ability to see the children's vulnerability on the road and her desire to meet the children's needs transformed her in the eyes of Janie Lee. Her grandma was also a superhero who she identifies as "The Captain of The Neighborhood." Her superpowers – a fifth grade education and a keen knowledge on "how–to–do–things." While the Board of Education was a system, her grandmother was a force who was on the children's side.

As Janie Lee explains, her grandmother needed nearly superhuman powers to take on the Board of Education. She (1) went to the Board and complained; (2) they gave her "soooooo much, such a hard time;" (3) she left the Board and went to the "road commission" and started a process to get them to upgrade the roads; (4) she got the roads upgraded; (6) the Board still refused to send the buses up the road; (7) she goes back to the community "and got petitions for everybody to sign," and then and only then, after (8) "goin' down practically weekly… for about

256 John Jr.

a year and a half" (9) the Board "finally came and picked everybody up at the door." As Janie Lee watched her grandmother activate her power as a community leader to transform the road, she witnessed both the denial and the validation of black childhood. Through watching her grandmother's struggle to gain support and protection for her and her comrades, Janie Lee received silent messages of unworthiness. These silent messages of unworthiness of protection were embedded in the inaction of the Board, and messages of worthiness of protection were evidenced in the unflagging labor her grandmother endured to have the children's vulnerability acknowledged, supported, and protected.

But too, her grandmother's labor provided a fierce show of love that was patient and would not back down, but rather held up her right, as a child, to be supported and protected by the Board and the County (i.e., road commission). In short, Janie Lee felt seen as a child and worthy of childhood supports and protections via the actions of community members and grandma. Their actions to resist or alter the road was sparked by the presence of Janie Lee and other children who the community saw as vulnerable to harsh weather on the road to school. Furthermore, as Janie Lee's grandmother confronted the Board and rallied the community, Janie Lee experienced feelings of delight at being championed by her everyday hero who, with little education but the knowledge of community and systems, stood, and changed the road and created a systemic opening for black childhood on the rural road. They were now picked up at their doors and free from the labor and vulnerabilities presented by the rain and the cold – every day.

In summary, Janie Lee's scene illustrates the children's labored presence traversing the unpaved road, weathering the cold and the rain, underlined their vulnerability and hence potential for suffering. Their vulnerability in the face of inadequate roads and shelter on the walk

to school marked the County's disregard and neglect for the youngster's. These poor conditions sparked adult activism. For example, everyday adult actors (e.g., cousins, community members) transformed their homes and cars into waiting stations where Black children experienced shelter from the cold.

Furthermore, Janie Lee's grandmother, Ms. Eliza illustrates one adults' efforts to force systemic change. The challenges Ms. Eliza's experienced as she organized to push the County to pave the road illustrates Juney Bugs previous statement, "all our people doing the best they could." As a parent and community member, Ms. Eliza had to struggle for over a year and engage a lot of labor (i.e., petitions, visits to the County etc.) to get the road paved. As a child witnessing her grandmother's efforts, Janie Lee experienced feelings of great support and protection as she and the other children were ecstatic that her grandmother had gone to bat for them and won. However, Ms. Eliza's ordeal revealed a lesson for little Janie Lee in the labor of waiting for equity. While Grandma labored for years, changed the road, and got the school bus to her door, her labor did not change the system. Victory, while sweet, still held a bitter taste as Janie notes "[b]ut – we alllllllllways got the secondhand bus." Via the secondhand bus, *the system* pulled up to Janie Lee's door every morning, silently reminding her and her comrades they were still on the margins of childhood, not worthy of a new, pretty, yellow bus of their own. For that, they would have to wait.

Closing Remarks

This chapter reveals the every day labors Black children experienced just getting to school. Narrators indicate they faced unforgiving terrain, had to tangle with inclement weather, and had to trapse long distances, and all of this was executed across time in routinized and exhausting ways. They felt cold, wet, mud, "little hills and valleys," fear, and physical exertion

(walking miles) as they pushed forward – and pushed forward they did. They had to move forward as they had to get to school. Their parents "very dearly believed in education."[257]

Although Black children routinely labored to get to school, they experienced protections and supports to get to the schoolhouse door. Some children were paired with older children (i.e., brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends) who made them feel they were supported. Others were suited up so that their clothing would endure the trek and they had the knowledge they needed to navigate the rugged terrain. In other instances, Black children were escorted to school by their parents who thought they were too vulnerable to make the trek alone. When the roads flooded or the rains poured, some children experienced being protected and supported by neighbors who opened their homes to provide shelter and waiting stations or manipulated the land (i.e., building makeshift bridges) so children could walk over high water. Taken together, these instances illustrate that although Black children traveled to school in poor conditions, they experienced being supported and protected in a myriad of ways as parents and community members sought to help the youngsters pass through to the schoolhouse – every day.

They were indeed children. The road and the extent of their travel was not built for their small bodies. And while the accordant physical demands and burdens were better suited for adult bodies and metaphorically challenged their status as children, the protections and supports provided by family and adult others soundly rejected their adultification. But even as children they possessed and evidenced agency.

In the labored daily commute to school – whether by walking or by bus – these once-children reported that they did not allow the poor conditions to diminish their opportunity to relish in the

[257] Mary Lock Fuseyamore, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly C. Ransom, July 2018.

childhood freedoms they envisioned being a school boy or school girl afforded them. Thus, while they faced the rugged conditions of the road, they imagined themselves walking on a plane elevated just above the road where they were still children on their way to school which afforded them the opportunity to indulge their agencies to play. In short, despite poor physical conditions, the road was for school, school was for children, and thereby this space was their dominion to do what children do: be playful. In the next chapter, narrators describe their experiences walking towards the schoolhouse, but rather than focus on the every day labor of the journey, these narrators focus on the every day childish agencies on the journey.

Chapter V | Everyday Childish Agencies

Introduction

Although the journey to school was laborious, the journey to school opened the opportunity for children to experience every day agencies as children. Black children indicated they experienced school as an expansive playing field that encompassed not only the school house, but spaces associated with school (e.g., the road to school, buses, etc.). On the journey to school, whether by bus or trek, the road to school was a space that became the province of Black children, where they could play and otherwise express their agency in developmentally fitting ways.

While children recalled playing in various spaces outside of school like church, home, and the field, these spaces were not particularly for children and thereby had limitations on childhood agencies. For example, spatially, homes were sparsely situated on the land and so at home, play was largely limited to the social world of siblings. There were few opportunities to be in the company of and play with larger peer groups of friends. Children recall playing in church, but in highly constrained ways because church was for worship and there were no special programs for children during that time. And while some children reported playing in the field, they indicated that play was only allowed after work was done. Hence, the walk to school, opened a new road for these children – a space to begin to taste and relish in the everyday liberties of being a child in a social world denoted specifically for children.

In this world of the road to school, I will delineate in further detail how once-children reported opportunities to engage and feel a sense of belonging among comrades – children who

were a part of and shared similar experiences and who also shaped childhood experiences together. But too, they had the opportunity to grapple with one another – to scrimmage, to fight--to essentially navigate conflicts in ways that children are more inclined to do.

The chapter opens with O'Neal's scene. O'Neal illustrates his experience attempting to play in a context that is not inside or associated with school. In this context, O'Neal finds he is not free to play. This scene put in sharp relief why children seemed to revel in play in spaces that were near exclusively theirs.

ACT I: "Runnin, Playing and Goin'"[258]

Scene I: "Wait a Minute Son"

O'Neal Lark (Part I)

O'Neal Lark's scenes "Wait a Minute Son" and "I'd Wanna Get on there and Clown" illustrate the limits or affordances of children's childish behavior in an adult world (i.e., the farm) verses a child's world (i.e., the school bus). His descriptions of his experience working in the fields with his grandfather, and then (in the second scene) his experience riding the school bus with his friends illustrates how these spaces – one for adults and the other for children – opened or restricted opportunities for play. Through O'Neal's accounts we are provided a window into how his everyday liberties to express his desire to play was more actionable once he was in his world of children.

> [A] lot of [kid's from my class] came down there to pick cotton from my granddad. He wouldn't let me pick. I picked 26 pounds of cotton in my life. Twenty-six pounds, [adds emphasis] and [he] caught me throwing a cotton ball. [Pa says] *"Whoa! Wait a minute, son."* [O'Neal laughs at his younger self caught in devilment]. He came up, "Whoa! Wait a minute." He'd tell you to *'wait a minute.' [He shifts his voice to emulate his Pa's stern, teaching, no-nonsense*

[258] William Petty, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, July 2018.

> *intonation. His reenactment of Pa's voice exudes warmth and also demand.]*[259] And that was the end of my cotton-picking days. I had the most lonesome job in the whole field. With the mule?! What?! [Lark humorously questions and emphasizes the disbelief he felt as a child and still]. [I was just] sitting at the wagon and weighing cotton [His tone and demeanor suggests he had been eternally outsmarted and benched by his Pa; away from his comrades and away from any opportunity to stir up play]. 'Bout every two and a half, three hours, somebody might bring a sack up, I'll weigh it, dump it, and give it back to them, they'd leave. I'd sit, I used to sit right there and oh Lord I hated, ohhhhh, that was ... I said, *"Pa, let me go back out there, I won't throw no more."* Although just a memory, O'Neal's tone pleads with his grandfather and then emulates his voice, *"I know you won't. You're not going back out there."*
>
> I sat right there every day, til we got the field picked. Um, that was, that was a mistake I made, and I would never make it, I never had a chance to make that mistake again. He never let me go back out there, cause I was throwing cotton balls at everybody, stopping everybody from picking cotton. See, I was playing, just like I was at school, you know. That's how I was at school, same way.

In his scene Lark remembers the time he attempted to stir things up among comrades while working in the cottonfield. His attempts to carve out space to play in that adult world didn't go so well. He was restricted from play and separated from the group. His presence in the field became completely limited to solitary work – a job that isolated him from any opportunity to stir things up.

Lark's tossing of a cotton ball illustrates his youthful desire and ability to use play to reimagine the material around him as opportunities for fun and connection. Working the field, picking cotton symbolized racial oppression, economic exploitation, and survival. But for a child, the plant was a cottony piece of goodness that could be flung into the air and transformed into a ball to toss or a funny thing to get stuck into someone's hair or tickle their skin as it landed on a shoulder, a neck or an ear. In other words, throwing the cotton could allow the field to be

259 Cite 'warm demander' literature. For more on warm demander and African American teachers see… Pa was a 'teacher' to his grandson. He didn't just work him in the field, he tried to teach him life lessons. This particular lesson was about caring for others, particularly the ability to empathize with others.

reimagined and transformed – cotton could be a tool to stir things up and the field could be a space for fun.

In addition, it does not seem Lark planned to play. By his description, it does not appear that he considered the space (i.e., fieldwork) or the limitations this space might impose on play. Lark did not consider what it might have meant if the children had lost themselves in a frenzy of tossing cotton rather than picking it. It appears, although at some level he understood how hard his Pa worked, and how other families experienced food shortages, but as a child, excited that his friends were with him in the field and ready to spring on this opportunity for play, he did not consider how play might have negatively impacted his Pa's bottom-line for the day and possibly the farming season. For Lark, it was just a great day to play. His inability to connect the dots – how stirring the kids up would railroad his Pa's workday – illustrates his innocence and desire to play even in the midst of a space designed for hard labor and survival. As a child, the desire to play was (quite naturally) strong and paramount.

It was not always the case that once-children could not find spaces to play outside of school. "Underneath a tree" Deloris Ransom created a "playhouse" made of "sticks," used "leaves and water" and pretended to cook for her "doll [her mother made] outta corn husks."[260] William Petty and his homies would "drive their tops" which was container lids they transformed into steering wheels to race up and down the road.[261] Johnny Benton recalled, "We didn't have no ball. We didn't have no goal." To play basketball, he and his friends created these things. They balled up paper bags to create basketballs, used "the rim of a bicycle" to create a basketball rim

260 Deloris Ransom

261 William Petty

and used one of the boy's mother's old panty girdle for a basketball net.[262] In the world around them, outside of school, Black children desired to play and exercised their right to do so – as they created their own toys from their imaginations and carved out space to ignite fun.

What Lark learned from that incident was that not all spaces outside of school could be reimagined for this purpose. In that instance, the field was for work, not play. As poor farmers or sharecroppers, in most cases a successful crop meant a family could at least eat through the winter and at best, have funds to purchase other needs for the family and farming supplies for next season.[263] While Lark was just exercising his youthful desire to carve out space to play, by attempting to stir things up among his comrades, for his granddad this was a mini uprising. Lark could have railroaded daily work goals. Essentially, Grandpa had to shut down the play – for survival. The farm would not be the space to romp around. If children entered the farm space, it would be to work.

For Lark, this would essentially mean he would have to find another space to play and build a community of play among comrades. And for many, as was the case for Lark, school and spaces associated with school expanded children's opportunity to carve these alternative play spaces. In the next section Lark's scene illustrates how the bus ride became one such place.

Scene: "I'd Wanna Get on There and Just- Clown"

O'Neal Lark (part II)

262 Johnny Benton

263 Paul Davis, Oral History interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, July 2018; Willie Howard, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly C. Ransom, July 2018; Johnny Benton, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, n.d.; John Wilkins Jr., Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, n.d.; For more on sharecropping see: Theodore Rosengarten and Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (University of Chicago Press, 2000).

O'Neal did not have to walk to school, nor did he have to take the bus. His grandmother was a teacher at his high school (Hopewell) and so he admits, many days he would ride to school with her. But sometimes he wanted to get on the bus so he could play. In the scene below, O'Neal describes the freedom the school bus offered him to be childish, and how he felt stepping inside.

> I always rode [to school] with my grandmother. I mean I would get on the bus sometimes, but I'd wanna get on there and just- clown, I'd fool or whatever you know, but- I know [because] when I get on the bus- everybody- *,"Ohhhhh, here come trouble!"*
>
> Mr. O'Neal's tone gets loud as he reenacts a crowd of youngsters bursting with excitement as they see the kid who stirred things up getting on the bus. I laughed out loud. Mr. O'Neal chuckled too and continued.
>
> I always had something you know, we would- always- had a little bag of somethin- you know- somethin. Mama would get up and fix breakfast before we leave every morning- and I always we have a little greasy sack, get on the bus- I got on the bus little greasy sack, biscuits stuck in there. Boyyy, I tell you, They - you know a lot of my class, they didn't get that. So, when I got on the bus, shoot they were like, "What cha got for me? What cha got?".
>
> Mr. O'Neal repeated the words rhythmically, like a playful chant: I laugh again as he plunged his memory into the little greasy sack.
>
> "I got a biscuit. Then we all- she always go out to the smoke house and get a piece of little ham or some little homemade smoked sausage or whatever."
>
> His description reflected not only the food in the sack but also the love and labor that was connected to the preparation of the little sack. As Lark described the scene, I felt the goodness and responded, "Mmmmm." Through his description II could visualize the crowd of children anticipating what love might spring out from O'Neal's sack if he shared.
>
> Shit, those kids loved to eat, eat, come on. …Mama loved to cook, you see? So, I just enjoyed going. Like I said, my grandfather taught me how to treat people. You treat people the way you want to be treated, they don't treat you that way, just walk away.

In O'Neal's second scene, he is now entering a space associated with school. In this space he felt liberty to play. Different from a smaller gesture of play in the field – the quick toss of a little cotton-ball – on the school bus, O'Neal has planned to successfully "get on there and just clown." Different from the field and expectations to adhere to a more adult role of work, on the school

bus O'Neal was now in his element. As a child the bus was his territory. His friends were there. They knew him and thereby anticipated his talent to liven up the atmosphere. They would embrace the fun he had been known to stir up. While O'Neal's desire to express play was quelled in the field, he experienced the school bus as a space where he could let loose and be silly, play with abandon and with little to no sense of limitation on his childish whims. His agency to be silly, to spark fun, without a sense of restriction on his right to do so reveals both his embodiment of the childhood inclination to create joy with and among friends.

Furthermore, O'Neal's scene illustrates children's desire and agency to be known and feel belonging. For O'Neal, part of being known and belonging was having your comrades read yourself back to you. In other words, he expressed a desire for wanting to "be funny" and make the others "laugh." The kids on the bus witnessed and validated O'Neal's desires when they shouted, *"Ohhhhh, here come trouble!"* While reflecting on this memory, O'Neal can recall that he *was* indeed funny, and a child who could stir things up – not because of his own recollection but rather because his comrades deemed it so. The word "trouble" did not mean something negative. On the contrary, the kind of trouble O'Neal embodied was associated with goodness and anticipated. The other children saw him as funny, silly, and a youngster who could create fun within the community and they validated these talents by acknowledging his presence when entering the bus. The children could have just plainly said *'Here comes O'Neal!'* But instead, they shouted with enthusiasm and identified him by his talent for bringing the fun, which they called "trouble." By speaking of O'Neal as an embodiment or metaphor for *trouble*, the kids signaled they understood something more personal about O'Neal – they knew him, were fond of him and that made him feel he belonged.

O’Neal’s account reveals a playful banter of “whatcha’ got” which illustrates one of the ways that the children communicated with one another. Play becomes apparent in the conveying and sharing of goodness – via O’Neal’s sack of food. According to O’Neal, his food was special as it had been cooked by “Mama”, his grandmother. He recalls knowing other classmates did not have a morning breakfast or something as yummy as his grandmother’s cooking for the ride to school. He knows as soon as he gets on the bus, his sack of Mama’s food is going to convey an opportunity that ignites his friends’ excitement. Play is expressed in the innocence of playfully vying for O’Neal’s food, but also play becomes an opportunity to express kindness and love as O’Neal shares his sack of goodness with his friends. Like his attempts at shapeshifting cotton picking into play, O'Neal shape shifts his bag of food, which could have set him apart from other children, as a point of connection via a guessing game that communicated equity through his sharing. In a member check via Facebook, O'Neal indicated that there were at least two other children that would share their food with everyone on the bus, “so no one went without." This confirmed that during play and comradery, children not only felt a sense of belonging but in Lark's case was also leveling the

Figure 25 Young People leaning against a school bus. Hopewell School. Circa 1955-1968. William Gore Collection.

playing field between the children who had and didn't have by offering a sense of belonging to his friends. In other words, 'if I have food, we all eat.'

Reflecting on himself as a child, O'Neal postulates that he was forwarding the same goodness that he would've wanted for himself and that he saw his Pa give to others in the community. While among friends who saw him as a silly little guy stirring things up, he also shared with his friends who he understood did not have lunches. Lark's play illustrates how Black children's expressions of fun and care can cultivate comradery through Black children's attempts to flatten differences across class rather than to exacerbate or use class as a tool to isolate peers.

Scene: "Chillun' Fillin' the Road"

John Wilkins Jr. (a.k.a. Juney Bug)

While Lark's entry onto the school bus opened a space to be with children and about childhood, John Jr. felt this opening as he entered the road to school alongside other children. The camaraderie and belonging John experienced mimicked that which Lark reported in his scene, but unlike Lark, John did not describe this as a play opportunity per se. His scene more precisely delineates how the space and consequently travel between home and school was a decidedly children's space.

To appropriate contextualize the meaning and significance of this child-centered space via the scene John communicates, you need to understand that John hesitated to start school. He wanted to maintain the freedoms he enjoyed outside of school -- namely "rabbit huntin'" and "playin.'" Nevertheless, recall his parents suited him up with clothing for school and prepared him to be a student. His mother mended his pants, ironed them, and made him a little lunch to

carry on his way. When his shoes turned "flappy" his father mended them and counseled him on how to "wade in the water" so that he could protect his feet from the terrain and extend the life of his shoes. In this scene, he is suited up and has walked out on the muddy road, armed in his school clothes, his school shoes (and school shoe preservation strategy), and his little sack of food. In addition to school clothing, and a little lunch sack, John Jr. has found himself walking alongside a lot of other children and among them, he felt a literal and figurative sense of esprit de corps (i.e., common bond, community, group spirit) and agency in the energy of their collective trek forward to school.

> Wellllll about a month later [after starting school], the road was full of chillun.' They started off about three or four and then wind up with 'bout thirty, walkin' the road [John Jr. almost sings this phrase signaling a sensation of momentum]. All the way from Arthur McClung and 'nem. All us chillun' we w- from Janie Sherrod, an 'nem. We had the whole crowd there, so. It was a fussy time and a bad time cause, you know, we- we had then walk, and the wagon road was filling with water. …So after about a month, accumulated a little more. Got a bit few more clothes to wear, but, uh- and it got more children that go along with. Then, they started to fix the lunch. Uh, either warm your lunch or you could bring a lunch from home in a sack, they'd warm it up in the kitchen.

After starting elementary school, John recalls encountering "a roooooooooad full of chillun" [John's actual emphasis] walking alongside one another to the schoolhouse. Encountering lots of children walking alongside one another on the journey to school made John Jr. feel sensations of togetherness – or as he states being among a "whole crowd." This "whole crowd" of children John describes also has momentum – they are growing – swelling, as they came from this way and that way, from three or four to 30, and later "more children that go along with." John's word choice of "a whole crowd" is significant in helping us understand how John Jr. recalls his

sensations and feelings as a young boy, "walkin, runnin, playin and goin"[264] along to school with more than 30 other Black children.

The intensity of John Jr.'s use of the word 'crowd' is magnified when I considered the definition of the word. As a noun, the word 'crowd' is defined as "a group of people who are linked by a common interest or activity," a large number of people gathered together in a disorganized or unruly way. As a verb, 'crowd' is defined as "(of several people who) fill (a space) almost completely, leaving little or no room for movement. In addition, synonyms for the word 'crowd' include a pack, party, crew, or circle."[265]

John Jr.'s word choice in describing his comrades as *"a crowd"* on the journey to school evokes a sensation of his circle, linked by the common interest and activity of journeying to school. The children's collective interests and activity are both literally and figuratively filling the space. In a literal sense, the sheer increasing numbers of their bodies are swelling the road. Collectively entering the road to school, the children were no longer separate groups associated solely by family affiliations (i.e., *the McClungs* or *Janie Sherrod and her siblings)*. On the road, the children were now a collective of *schoolchildren* engaged in a mission that racial oppression had altogether outlawed for their parents, previous generations, and had still severely limited for them. Despite these harsh truths walking to school was an exercise designed particularly for schoolchildren. The mission was school, the daily practice was getting there together. They were on that mission.

Figuratively their bodies were filling a historical path: the path to education. As previously stated, across interviews, many once-children recalled education had been forbidden

264 William Petty interview

265 Oxford English Dictionary, "Oxford English Dictionary," *Simpson, JA & Weiner, ESC*, 1989.

or extremely limited for their parents, grandparents, ancestors, and Black folks more generally. For example, earlier in his interview, John Jr. mentioned as a child he had witnessed *"...no black person could get an education. That wasn't no easy thing. You had to really wanted to get it."* He indicates his parents were not educated. Even his mentor, Mr. Locke, who came and recruited John Jr. for school had only been able to achieve a fourth-grade education. His daughters –once-children Mary, Paulette, and Carolene indicate Mr. Locke's mother, "Grandma Dora," had been enslaved. John Jr.'s own father had been born on "a plantation."

Furthermore, many of his peers struggled to get onto the trek to school because rather than being under their parents' direction, "they had to gather the crops and were under somebody else's direction of when you can and when you can't [go to school].[266] For example, another narrator in the study, Curly Collie, recalled a moment when, as a child, he was nearly swept into the grip of sharecropping which would have adversely impacted his ability to attend school. Curly recalled:

> They [his parents] wanted for me to go to school, but what I really hate about it, I'll never forget, one day I was at home, and a sheet of paper come by our house.
>
> You understand what I'm saying?
>
> A sheet of paper.
>
> Come by my house, and they [white planter] told my parents, said, "I want your children to help pick cotton, to help finish it out before it gets cold."
>
> *"Oh, my children can't go! My children need an education just like your children do."*
>
> And that was, you know, I stood up and looked at him, and I looked at Mama. I didn't understand what she was talking about.
>
> But now, you send your children to school to get a learning, why you want mine to stay here and pick cotton?
>
> And I thought about that for years. I thought about that for years, how low-rated we have been.

[266] Paulette Locke Newberns, Oral History Interview, interview by Ransom, July 1, 2018.

Curly's ability (and other children in the study) to get on the road to school was complicated or altogether halted because their parents were sharecroppers which meant they were caught in an oppressive slave-like system where they worked farms in exchange for housing and pay. However, sharecroppers were never paid, but rather were tricked out of their money and locked into a credit system levied by the white farmers who took advantage of Blacks illiteracy, and vulnerability brought on by severe poverty.[267] Cheating Blacks out of their pay kept the sharecroppers in debt to the white farmers, tied to the farm and thereby in bondage. Because the sharecroppers' position, white farmers would require sharecroppers' children to work instead of attend school (as Ms. Paulette has indicated and Mr. Curly has illustrated).

Hence, John Jr., was surrounded not only by the historical struggles of his elders but also his peers. Like his peers, John Jr. who was just one or two generations removed from slavery and a child who witnessed the barriers to education suffered by generations before him and still by his peers, described feeling a sense of awe and momentum as his generation took to the road to trek on up to the schoolhouse.

John Jr.'s description of children's momentum filling the road, harkens back to oral history and in-time data from once-children on the journey to school. In-time data (e.g., photographs and a student authored yearbook) also reveal once-children's sense of comradery as they journeyed to school together. While these pieces of data do not specifically depict once-children on the walk to school, the data do illustrate children's sense of comradery as they moved through school together. For example, Hopewell's 1963 Annual (i.e., yearbook) embodies the sentiment of children feeling comradery for their classmates (See Figure 20). While the excerpt

[267] Shaw and Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw*.

does not literally reference the "walk to school," the document does capture feelings of comradery among children in-time.

In the Annual, the Class of 1963 documents sensations and experiences they encountered starting school and journeying through school together. In particular they recount their communal journey over a 12-year span, similar to how Janie and Ethel's mentioned their years attending school together (i.e., "the first through the third," and "the first through the seventh"). In this document, Hopewell Seniors recall journeying to school together for 12-years. Over this time, they chart a comradery as noted by a traveling "we." For example, the children indicate they started school as a collective, "50 sad faced Jetsons." Describing themselves as *50 sad faces*, reluctant to start school (i.e., "we would rather have stayed home") marks the children's shared feelings and collective innocence. Everyone was sad and hesitant to embark upon this new thing called school. But "step by step" still together, they recall "we" increased and decreased. Here, they are noting they experienced the gains and losses within their collective bunch. This is further illustrated by their remembrances of who they started school with and who left the group. Throughout, the group remains familiar as the first and last names of peers who joined and left are documented. The group even recalls when no one left or joined the group, "in the sixth grade, there were no Jetsons arriving." Their notice of children moving in and out of the group as well as the groups standstill provides evidence of their experience of being a unit. They also felt a collective sense of accomplishment as they proclaim, "we knew we had made it for we were in Junior High School."

As I recalled participants previous oral history accounts of their encounters on the walk to school encountering dirt, flowers, mud, wagon tracks etc., I could visualize a thought picture of a crow of children “fillin the road.” In the picture children kicked up dirt, picked flowers, dodged

wagon tracks (maybe one child stumbled or tripped), unleashed banter at levels far too loud for any respectable adult gathering space, giggled, shouted, perhaps some pulled at one another's lunch bags to measure who had what, one child dug into his pocket and pulled out a hand full of colorful marbles to signal to his friend a game would commence once they hit the playground.[268]A little girl and her sister rolled down the *'uncool'* stockings their mother made them wear to keep their legs warm.[269] Another little girl and her friends ran ahead, just behind the older children, so that they could play their game of *peeping for a day*.[270] As I recalled these accounts previously shared by other narrators, all 30 children were, in my mind's eye, "walkin' the road,"[271] or "runnin, playin, and goin"[272] excited to enter into a new day among their comrades and feeling a sense of group spirit through their common bond as schoolchildren.

My imagination was reigned in a bit as John Jr. returned to the literal conditions of the road – layered with the elements of harsh land and water and the scene of '30 chillun' fillin' the road.' He recalled, "[S]o. It was a fussy time and a bad time cause, you know, we- we had then [to] walk, and the wagon road was filling with water." [273] As John Jr. juxtaposed the *water filling* the road with *Black children filling* the road, I was invited into a parallel world literal and figurative. In both worlds, because of school, Black children entered the space. In the literal world, there were rugged conditions that Black children would labor through to get to school. In

268 James Kirkland, interview by the author, Pickensville, Alabama.

269 Carolene Locke Wright, interview by the author, Pickensville, Alabama. July 24, 2018.

270 Janie * Ethel, Pickensville, Alabama. July, 2018.

271 Wilkins Jr., Oral History Interview.

272 William Petty, Interview with author, Ethelsville, Alabama. July 21, 2018.

273 John Wilkins Jr., interview by the author, Pickensville, Alabama. July 20, 2018.

a figurative world, this was an expanded space – a world specifically for schoolchildren – where Black children could more fully realize their childhood status to be schoolchildren together.

They freely trekked together – a pack and a party – a crew and a circle – traversing the landscape during a "fussy time" with the common mission to become educated. Black children's bodies illustrated virtuous defiant presence on the road – disrupting the past and altering the future – as being there in large numbers signaled positive educational change. Their presence and common mission further imbued a sense of group spirit and community among the young ones.

The camaraderie John felt as he walked alongside peers to the schoolhouse was experienced as momentum. School brought them together, broadened their connections to other children which further expanded the possibilities, experiences and agencies that marked his childhood status – namely a sense of comradery and belonging. In the next scene, Caroline feels an easy breezy pace to school with her sister, Paulette. They are not in a crowd of children nor is there the energized momentum of 30 Black children swelling the road. These two Black girls enjoy a leisurely saunter to school. Nevertheless, their sense of comradery now matched with play but in a different form than previously mentioned by Lark.

Scene: "Mmm-hmm. Played."

Carolene Locke Wright

Like previous once-children's recollections of walking to school, Carolene (Car-leen) recalled feeling free to perform expressions of childhood while making her way to school with her sister. As she and her sister explored along the way, their play is not among a "crowd" of children but rather, escapades in play happen in the quiet of two little girls making their way down the road. Her recounting is evidenced below. Carolene’s scene foregrounds the girls'

agency to play and explore on the journey. Although not in a crowd of children, Carolene and her sister's actions feel expansive along the path because their play expands the space as well. As they play and explore together, their actions transform the ordinariness of the road to school into wonder. Also, Caroline's scene provides a deeper window into Black children's sense of togetherness and camaraderie.

> So, we walked to school whether it was rain, shine, sleet, or snow.
>
> K: "Do you remember what you all did on the walk?"
>
> Ms. Carolene's lips don't immediately open, but instead they bend into a soft smile reminiscent of a girl holding a piece of sweet candy in her mouth, and she hums an affirmative, Mmmmm-hmmmmm, and then releases one definitive expression: Played. She laughs—tickled by her own memory. Late for school. Or [we] had that- wore like the brown stockings to keep you warm. Well by the time you get to school you roll them down, they look like socks. (Laughter). That was brought in- Mind you I don't know what everybody else did but, uh, we had to wear those brown stockings. It kept you warm in the wintertime.
>
> We played in grass, me and [my sister] Paulette. It's so funny, I don't remember my little brother, Thornal, walking with us. I guess he might've gone on, you know. And just [figured], "*They comin'."* So, me and Paulette must be right there just playing in the grass and [thinking], "Oh this is where Ms. Green get her sour dirt from." We'd dig in that a while and- You know go all… We wouldn't make it dirty or nothing- we just looked at it. And we'd kind of taste it maybe, I didn't like that. My mother didn't eat sour dirt. And most of the time we got to school on time. Yeah. But it was mostly just walking to school, and talking, and you know, pulling a limb, or a flower, or something.
>
> Uh. …I forgot something. Okay. Um. You, you interviewed, uh, Curly Collie.
>
> Yes.
>
> His mom's house was where one of the trails end back there. Yeah that trail of ... and back up, the one in the curve. That was their house seat. So in the wintertime when the wood[s] get really cold and me and Paulette done played in the dirt and got cold- Diggin in curly litte icy things coming out the ground- and we used dig and play in that. I guess that's what the frost made and it would spew out of the ground.[274]

274 This sentence "Diggin in curly little icy things coming out the ground and we used dig and play in that. I guess that's what the frost made and it would spew out of the ground," is not in the original transcript but rather additional data offered during an off the cuff phone conversation during member checking. The sentence offered a further detailed description of Ms. Carolene's original memory of playing in the cold dirt. I have added it here.

> We, we knew where to get our hands warm. We stopped at Ms. Queen Collie's.
>
> Carolene imitates Ms. Queen's soft, sweet voice, "*Come onnnnnn in here*. Warm those hands. You all are going to be late for school." She would warm us up a little bit. *"Put 'em in this water first."*[275] Go to school it wouldn't be like- It would be like, yeah. That was our stopping point when me and Paulette we like hung around and got cold--should've been in school. We'd stop right at her house and get our hands warm by the fire.

Carolene and her sister, the only two youngsters walking to school in this memory, used play and playing together to respond to and shape the social world around them. In this social world they were intimately connected. At every turn, their play communicated warm fellowship – they are walking along the road, talking with one another, and touching the world around them (i.e., "pulling a limb, or a flower, or something"). As she describes her scene, Carolene speaks in terms of "we," never letting go of the memory of her sister equally engaged in their escapades. Across most of the action in the scene, the girls are acting together as a unit. For example, Carolene states, "*we* played… we'd dig…*we'd* just look… *we* wouldn't make it dirty… *we* brought you some flowers… *we* didn't say no ma'am… *we'd* stop right at her house, *we* just remembered." This sense of "we" as described by Carolene illustrates, she was not alone. She had a sense of comradery among just two children.

Her scene also illustrates the magnitude of the world that can be imagined by just two Black girls, together, and determined to play. While Juney Bug's road was transformed by the momentum of the crowd of children, Caroline and Paulette transformed the road via the leisurely agency of two. As the girls move on down the road together, they use play to imagine, explore

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275 This sentence " Put 'em in this water first," is not in the original transcript but rather additional data offered during an off the cuff phone conversation during member checking. The sentence offered a further detailed description of Ms. Carolene's original memory of playing in the cold dirt. I have added it here.

and shape the world around them. In this world, the girls not only play with the physical material that surrounds them (i.e., dirt, flowers, ice) they also play with time. For example, Carolene's scene reveals girls curiously engaging their environment. She describes she and her sister looking, exploring grass, pulling a leaf, digging in dirt, tasting, picking, warming. These activities take time and could expand the time it would take the girls to get to school. Carolene indicates their play would sometimes make them "late for school." Furthermore, when the girls make a pit stop to warm their hands following a play session in cold dirt, their neighbor provides them with support but also gently warns them, "You are going to be late for school", reminding the girls to be conscious of time.

But playing with time, provides a window into the girls' naturalness, innocence, and naiveté. They are not attempting to cut school. They are simply wrapped up fulfilling their natural childhood desire to play. In doing so, the children innocently and unreflexively indulged their liberty to play. Childishly they are losing track of time and not thinking about the consequences associated with being late for school. They loosely remained aware that they must make it to their destination at a particular time. But play must happen too. Through their play the girls expressed a budding independence as their temporary suspension of time allowed them to extend their opportunities to explore and express their own creativity, choice making, and preferences. For example, their curiosity and desire to explore compelled them to slow down their walk to school – to stop, dig and taste sour dirt. As they curiously explored and tasted the dirt, the girls were careful to not disrupt the space by having made Ms. Green’s dirt " dirty.” Carolene tapped into her own independence as she chose to taste the sour dirt although she knew her mother didn't like the dirt. In her exploration, she discovered she “didn’t like" the taste of sour dirt either.

And here too, as in the previous chapter, amid play (and the labor of walking to school) the girls found protection. As was the case in the previous chapter, their childhood status was marked by how adults extended their care and protection in and or around their agency when articulated as play. While in previous scenes waypoints marked the labor of distance children traveled, Caroline's account illustrates how she and her sister reimagined a waypoint as a space for connection, care, and support. Rather than just pass Ms. Queen's house as a waypoint, the girls stopped there to get help getting warmed up. The girl's presence and play expanded Ms. Queen's house, from serving as solely a marker of distance on the walk to school, to also serving as a potential space of care, support, and connection for them. Stopping at Ms. Queen's to warm their hands, Carolene and her sister could prompt support and care (i.e., getting their hands warmed) and connection (i.e., kindness and guidance) from an adult who lived along the journey to school.

Caroline's scene and previous scenes have illuminated the different ways Black children experienced comradery and belonging as they trekked to school. In the next scene, Janie Bell's recounting demonstrates that comradery was not always the outcome. Sometimes, as older children explored their independence, younger ones, like Janie Bell, found that their power to make relational connections with the older ones challenging. But even with these relational challenges, the propensity for childhood play prevailed.

Scene: "Peeping for a Day"

Janie Bell Curry-Sherrod

This scene returns to Janie Bell. Recall in Chapter IV, Janie Bell and Ethel were walking to school – engaged in their routine trek across distance, time, facing fears and weathering cold. In this scene, Janie Bell is still wrapped in the "every day" but she is not foregrounding the labor

of walking. This time, she is engulfed in "every day" play as she has made a game out of spying on the older children who are walking with her. The older children – although still a supportive presence – are walking, and talking among themselves and Janie Bell is trying to peep her way in. As Janie Bell bouncily plays to get a glimpse into the social world of the older children, they shoo her out. They want their space, and Janie Bell wants to see.

> We [would] walk home and- and- and the kid- big kids trying to get rid of you. Go! Go! [Says as if shooing someone]. Ever- every d[ay]- you know, the girls were walking and talking, and- with the boys, and stuff. I ain't never seen them kiss or anything like that, because I- I probably would have been right there to see that, but ... they'd be walking and talking and holding hands or something like that. But that's as far as I ever seen them in school.
>
> But you could tell what boy would like ... and we'd be saying, "oh, that boy liked that girl, that boy liked that girl." You know kids, though, when they- they little. And they be saying, "get on away from here!"[Janie Bell laughs at the memory of being shooed by the older kids]. They'd be walking and talking and holding hands or something like that. I never courted in school. I think I never courted in sch- but I used to watch the girls and boys though. I would be peeping for- for day. And you'd be standing right over them, try- trying to listen and hear everything they was saying, and look- and looking.

Janie Bell's scene provides a window into her previous mention of being escorted to school by older children. Recall, Janie Bell (and Ethel) experienced support and protection from the older children as they escorted them to school each day. In that scene, Janie Bell and the other little children were vulnerable to the elements (i.e., dog, cold, rough lands). This scene illuminates the innocence of both the young and older children as she touches on the difference of developmental stages across the children. While the teens are entering into the exploration of "liking" one another, the little ones are innocently trying to sneak a *peep* at this seemingly scandalous and sensational action of "holding hands" and "liking" one another.

Janie Bell's description of 'peeping for a day' embodies frisky youngsters being shooed away by older children who are trying to shape their own play experiences. While the teens are

not yet adults, they are developmentally becoming aware of the opposite sex[276] and maybe experiencing attraction and affectionate feelings towards someone. Younger children made a game out of trying to see what the older ones were up to. They were captivated with guessing who liked who and the excitement of getting shooed away but coming back for more. This was drama. The little peepers were like little honeybees to shoo – trying to listen, trying to see just what was going on with these older children 'liking' that boy or that girl. For the younger ones, to get glimpse of the sweet forbidden fruit of young love – to taste scandal, drama, and thereby fun to be had. While the little ones were engulfed in play just 'peeping for a day,' the older ones were reaching towards adulthood – not yet there, but nevertheless, in the handholding of another, trying on just a little bit of freedom and independence through innocent romantic play.

In-time data depicts younger children's efforts to "sneak a peep" or said another way – get into the business of the older children. Photographs authored by once-child William Gore in the 1950s depict some of the children's experiences on the playground of Mamiesville School. At the time, a teen himself, Mr. William shot ten of the photographs[277] These ten photographs illustrate this game of 'peeping for a day' alongside older children's playful exploration of fondness and attraction.

276 Note, no one spoke of students in same sex relationships. I use the term "opposite sex" relationships because this is what once-children in the study discussed.

277 There are a total of 216 photographs in Mr. William Gore's Collection. The entire collection depicts the every day experiences of Black children on the grounds of Mamiesville or Hopewell Schools.

In these photos (See Figure 26) taken circa 1957, it appears once-child, Stanley Neal (pictured on the right in both photos) tries to infiltrate the older children's photoshoot.[278] As his body first faces the other children and then faces the camera there is a sensation that he is fluttering around in the frame like a butterfly looking for a spot to land. He appears to want to be beside the older children. In the photograph on the left, he is smiling, and his body appears to be in motion as if he were going to try to squeeze his way into the photograph. While Stanley is buzzing in his fun, the older ones are engulfed in posing for the camera—which includes hugging, giving face, and leaning in close to one another, and not paying attention to the young one trying to penetrate their posing. They don't even look over at Stanley who appears to be

Figure 26 Right to Left Stanley Neal, Daisy Lee Lagrone and two other youth on the playground of Mamiesville School. Courtesy of the William Gore Collection.

278 James Stanley Neal is my uncle. My mother's youngest brother. Growing up, except for one photograph, my mother and her siblings had no pictures of their childhoods in Alabama. In 2015, I visited with once-child William Gore. Our meeting was a last-minute meeting that was seeded through snowballing – a key narrator (i.e., key informant), once-child, Ms. Ora Alston. She told Mr. Gore about my interest in Rosenwald Schools. At that time, I was chasing a picture of Mamiesville School – the elementary school my mother and her siblings attended (which I still haven't found). Mr. Gore was known in the community for having been a photographer all his life – even at a very young age. Although he didn't have a full photograph of Mamiesville School, he had photos with the schoolhouse in the background as seen above in Figure 26. Mr. Gore shared his photographs with me, allowing me to take photographs of his photos with my phone. When I returned home and started examining the photographs, I found my mother, and my uncles Arthur and Stanley among the collection.

trying to make his way into the shot. We can't know, but perhaps they tell him 'no' or perhaps they just ignore him. Whatever the case, he never fully makes it into the shot. He is not welcomed into the embrace/pose.

In the photograph Figure 26, Stanley and the older children are behaving in a manner that is akin to Janie Bell "standing right over" older children on her walk to school, "try- trying to listen and hear everything they was saying and look- and looking." And, like Janie Bell, the older ones appear to be "trying to get rid of [Stanley]" by not inviting him into the photo. Their body language reads *"Go! Go!"* – the words Janie Bell recalled the older children telling her on her walk to school.

In the second photo on the right (Figure 26), Stanley remained persistent and has made his mark off the right of the frame. He is still not welcomed into the world of hugs the older children have curated before his very eyes. He also is not completely kicked out of the photo either. Like a honeybee, he hovered seemingly trying to get his chance to be in the big kids' world. Meanwhile, the older ones seem to tolerate his presence while they also marked their freedom as budding teens to strike their poses without him which captured their exploration of intimacy and desire for independence—separate from the younger ones. But like

Figure 27 Stanley Neal, Edward Gore and other children pose on Mamiesville School's Playground (Circa 1957). Courtesy of the William Gore Collection.

Janie Bell, Stanley appeared to be persistent. By the third photo (Figure 27) Stanley has found a pal and together they have squeezed themselves into the frame just a little more.

Mr. Gore's photos do not capture Black children on the walk to school but rather on the playground. Still, the photographs illustrate children's nuanced experiences of camaraderie as children split in age and begin to explore relationship in different forms. While in-time data helps to visualize "peeping for a day," memory data provides a window into how the older children may have felt as they tried to sneak and hold hands or conversate with a crush. Several once-children recall their feelings and actions related to coming of age and beginning to think about intimacy between boys/girls. For example, Mary recalled:

> Uh well I tried to come of age, there. *INT: (Laughs)"Well, what does that mean?"* Well that means- That means that, I was looking for a boyfriend but I didn't know how to do it. I would grin and giggle. *INT: At school?* Yeah. I would look, I would look at them and turn my head the other way and hope they see a looking. I knew I was supposed to attract the opposite [gender]. I knew that.[279]

Willie H recalled:

> There was courtships that went on between the students and the girls. Of course, I never had a real girlfriend because I was always afraid. I saw so many girls that got pregnant and left school. I didn't want to mess their lives up and I didn't want to get indicted for being the cause of some like that. [280]

And Herbert Hughes remembered:

> Where we had the privilege of roaming from one place to another [because I had a car]. We were just like, wolves on the prowl. (Laughs)[281]

While these accounts are also not situated on the walk to school, they do provide a window into what the older children thought about courting. The children likely carried these thoughts,

[279] Lock Fuseyamore, Oral History Interview.

[280] Howard, Oral History Interview.

[281] Herbert Hughes, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, June 2018.

feelings and dispositions with them as they explored courting on the walk to school. Like Mary, some might have been nervous because they really didn't know "how to do it." Others may have felt like Willie H. afraid to get involved at all because of the risks involved which Willie named as prematurely having to take on adult responsibilities and compromise education (e.g., the responsibilities of a pregnancy). Others, like Herbert, may have fully basked in their freedom to explore courting like "wolves on the prowl" – seeing it as an opportunity to roam and just have a lot of fun. No matter the child's perspective, these voices coupled with Janie Bell's recollection would indicate that on the outside, older children were having fun exploring their independence, but inside themselves they also grappled with the complexity of intimacy, the uncertainties and fears it brought as they learned how to navigate their newfound desires.

Furthermore, once-children often reported, relationships (if allowed) were heavily monitored by parents. For example, once-child Anne shared, "Yeah-some of them- some of these parents were really strict, you know? Hey. [With emphasis signaling the parents strictness]. They liked to keep you in their sight all the time. I remember they had a movie house, but I've never been inside of it in my life!"[282] And Mary recalled, "You had to be 16 or older [to date]."[283] Although these children were older, they remained under the supportive and protective eye of parents to keep things innocent, as Willie E. confirmed:

> Just holding hands and kiss. That was great. That was the great thing. That, that, now I remember a lot about that because that's what I usually was doing. But it wasn't about sex. (Laughs) Because you know, you got, them fathers back then was rough. You ain't getting no chance like that. But it was a lot of fun. I enjoyed, I enjoyed school. I really did. I, I missed it when I graduated so.[284]

[282] Anne Petty, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly C. Ransom, July 2018.

[283] Lock Fuseyamore, Oral History Interview.

[284] Willie E. Henley, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly C Ransom, July 2018.

Willie E.'s description illustrates how children's innocence was protected and also as a boy, he explored the "great" feelings of holding hands and kissing but as he explained – that was it. Fathers were "rough" back then – meaning, they were monitoring things between the girls and boys. Taken together, narrators of their teen years provide a window into their innocence and naivete concerned with courting. While Janie Bell was innocently and excitably peeping up at them, the older ones held innocence too. As they explored intimacy, they grappled with their own inexperience, concerns, or unbridled excitement.

Janie Bell's description of sneaking a peak at older children's experiences of courting on the walk to school, coupled with the in-time and memory data, shines a light on how the walk to school (and spaces associated with school) opened opportunities for children to experience liberties to get to know one another and establish fondness and crushes for another. Also, her description illustrates how Janie Bell and her friends, who were younger children, used the older kid's crushes as an opportunity to create play – namely drama. While the older kids might have taken liberty to "like" one another and perhaps sneak to "hold hands," the younger ones created excitement and drama out of trying to catch the action of teenage business. Taken together, the camaraderie between the older children and the younger ones reveals a young world where children may have parted developmentally. While the older children engaged in and pursued romantic play appropriate to their age, the younger ones scoped these innocent romantic explorations in playful ways that were also age appropriate. Together these distinct but related childhood expressions of play enabled the children to navigate together the shared youthful social world that school, its grounds, and the to and fro between home and school afforded all of them.

But there were still other developmental expressions of childhood that took place in spaces associated with school (e.g., the walk to and from school or on the playground). These expressions were not about comradery, imaginative field play, or romantic exploration and peeping. They demonstrated instead how young people perform and negotiate conflict or establish hierarchy in decidedly childish ways.

ACT II: Scrimmages, Fights, and Fighting Back

Scene: II "Man! You Beat Me!"

Willie Howard

In addition to experiencing comradery while trekking to school, Black children also experienced scrimmages and fights. These scrimmages and fights were related to childish tests of strength, sport, disagreements, or self-defense. While once-children did not discuss "scrimmages" as happening while walking to school, they did discuss these tussles on the playground. One can imagine the playground was either the end point for the walk to school or the beginning point for the walk home after dismissal. Either way, once-children described these scrimmages taking place on school grounds. In this scene, Willie Howard recalled a scrimmage which he described as a friendly scuffle with the purpose of testing one another's strength.

> There were occasional fights on the, on the, uh, on the grounds. And that was amusement for us (Laughs). But it would, but it was never, it was never a, the kind of fight that people were injured. It was just, it was just scrimmages. And sometimes you would have to break up the fight. There were no knives. Anything like that. And you got taken to the principal's office and the principal... I do not remember anybody getting suspended. But it was a big ... That's, uh, almost like family.
>
> Yeah, um, uh, I know one thing, one of them I thought I could whoop him but I got turned out we got in a boxing match, we weren't fighting. But we got in a boxing match one time and he had long arms than I had (laughter). So he started throwing overhead punches at me. And just beat me down because he was throwing overhead punching. And I- with those kind of punches then he just, he

> just beat me down! I said, *"Man you beat me!"* And you know, that was the end of it.

In Willie's scene, he recalls fights on the school grounds were not an everyday occurrence, fights were "occasional." Although children had a bit more independence walking to school and on the playground, they did not take liberties to fight all the time; fighting was not an everyday occurrence. When fights did break out, Willie recalls, fights were more like "scrimmages" and mostly experienced as a source of "amusement." Amusement is defined as " the state or experience of finding something funny or amusing," and is associated with terms such as entertainment, a game, activity that provides pleasure, lightheartedness, and sport."[285]

Considering these definitions of amusement, Willie's remembrances of occasional fights illustrate the innocence involved in children's fighting. The innocence is apparent in what Willie describes as the absence of malice embedded in children's periodic tussles. Although Willie does not say it plain, his account indicates that children may have had disagreements which they sometimes tried to resolve through tussles or as Willie states "scrimmages." His description of "scrimmages" demonstrates how fights were not serious. He is adamant that no one is injured as he repeats the word "never" twice to emphasize the benign nature of children's altercations.

Furthermore, he measures the benign nature of the fights by the outcome of the fights (i.e., no one was hurt) and whether there were weapons involved (i.e., no knives). The intention to hurt someone and the possession of weapons would be associated with malice and more sinister likely associated with adultlike behavior. Willie's effort to show the absence of these instances and material reveals the children's innocence even amid fighting. We might speculate that they were trying to solve disagreements that erupted from play in the children's social world.

285 Oxford English Dictionary https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/amusement

Sometimes, when trying to solve a disagreement verbally, children may come to an impasse – not understanding and not being understood or unheard. As a result of frustrated communication, a test of strength might ensue. In other words, a child might react physically to solve an issue they found themselves unable to resolve verbally. Alternatively, the children may have been practicing, via “play fights”, gender-specific ways of asserting dominance. It was clear in this scene that Willie had been “beat” and had to concede dominance to his sparring partner. Whether a reflection of immature conflict resolution skills or age-appropriate physical play to assert dominance, some children were intent on resolving real or playful disagreements themselves, rather than "tattle telling" to an adult. Participants[286] explained that tattle telling was a kind of breach of the social world of children which allowed adults to intrude on and regulate what was otherwise children's business.

No matter how and why conflict ensued, Willie indicated they were to be regulated by children. He recalls children not only witnessed fights but, in some instances, children "broke up fights." This would mean that children had the ability to intervene and stop fights. In the following scene, John Jr. will discuss a time when he tried to break up a fight. For John Jr., stopping the fight was a matter of protecting his little sister. As Willie has indicated in this scene, and John Jr. will illustrate in the following scene, fighting could also land a child in the principal's office. Willie does not recall serious punishment for fighting, but rather he experienced children being reprimanded with a familial approach and without drastic measures

[286] William Petty, Oral History Interview; O’Neal Lark, Interview by Kimberly Ransom, July 2, 2016, Interview 10B-Lark, transcript., interview by Kimberly C. Ransom, 2016, Interview 10B; Paul Davis, Oral History interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, July 2018; Paulette Locke Newberns, Oral History Interview, interview by Ransom, July 1, 2018.

such as school suspension. John Jr.'s scene will provide a window into being called to the principal's office after a fight.

It is important to note, data across participants who recall fights or fighting indicate these fights occurred in elementary school. No one mentioned fighting in high school. This could be because by high school, developmentally, children are more mature and may have a more sophisticated ability to solve problems through communication. In any case, Willie substantiates the notion that children's occasional fights were not launched to harm another child, but rather to solve a childhood disagreement.

Another reason for fighting, according to Willie, was to establish hierarchy via the testing of one another's strengths. Absent malintent this playground negotiation of dominance was infused with amusement. Recall how in sizing up a male peer, Willie thought, *"I could whoop him!"* But after getting into a "boxing match" with the boy, he quickly figured out the boy's arms were longer than his own. What initially felt like a playground championship morphed into a playground "beat down."

As he recalls the *beating*, Willie references the boy's skill – specifically his "throwing overhand punches" as if their match was indeed a sport. This fight was not about ill feelings, it was about a test of strength, ability, and skill and who would prove superior And although Willie lost this test, he also seemed to be invigorated by it. As he remembers the scrimmage, he still speaks with excitement and amazement.

This scrimmage took Willie on a rollercoaster of emotion which, like a rollercoaster, was – electrifying. The thrill of the scrimmage was both in the testing of strength as well as the possibility of winning. Hence the process of scrimmaging reveals another form of play, a stimulating game where boys could put their developing bodies to the test. Lastly, there appears

to have been rules of respect associated with their scrimmage game. After determining he had lost, Willie conceded with no problem. The other boy had won fairly. Willie's acceptance of defeat illustrates the boys' sense of norms and respect related to play which in this case, was scrimmages. In the next scene, I transition from tussles as scrimmages to tussles as fighting. As Juney Bug makes the decision to fight, his experience grappling with his decisions and choices are apparent.

Scene III: "Who You Been Whoopin' Up?"

John Wilkins Jr. (a.k.a.) "Juney Bug"

Once-children also reveal that fights were not always scrimmages rooted in exploration, fun, and games. Sometimes there was conflict amok, including fights. Once-children indicate fights were not a reflection of mass pandemonium or premeditated delinquent behavior but rather, once-children indicate they had reasons for fighting and that they experienced moral dilemmas as they grappled with whether to fight. Findings indicate fights were associated with self-defense (or the defense of others) and disagreements. In this scene, John Jr. recalled walking to school, approaching the playground and suddenly finding his sister being walloped on in a fight. Although he did not condone fighting, nor did he want to fight, he felt he had to come to his sister's defense. John Jr.'s efforts to rescue his sister revealed not only children's involvement in fights but also their reasons for doing so.

> We, uh... I was started. I went on. I went about, uh, a year, and then my little sister got started with me, and, uh. Mm-hmm (affirmative)- We'd walk on up there in the morning. Then, all at once, the children started to fight. They started nailing her, and she would cry, and I'd kind of break that up and got into a fight with em.
>
> Then, Momma had to go up to the school with me- To talk to the teachers about it, you know? And- and, uh, I didn't believe in this fighting, but it was somebody who my little sister... Either one... I didn't mind fighting. And, uh, she talked to me when I got home. *"Now, I ain't saying I let nobody jump on you and beat you*

> *up, but don't fight if you can keep from fighting."* I said, "Well, I didn't have no choice. They jumped on my little sister, and she were crying and I had to fight, so I went ahead." Well, somehow, Cousin Jim got the word that I had been fighting at school.
>
> He come on the horse that evening. He come on over there. *"Juney bug?"* "Sir?" *"Who you been whooping up?"* I said, "I didn't whoop up nobody. A girl jumped on my little sister," and I said, "I had to get her off." He said, *"Well, sometime you have to do that, but don't fight if you can get around it."* He said, "[If] Y'all cannot fight, don't."

John Jr.'s account demonstrates how once-children's social world on the way to school, beyond the watchful eye of adults, also included sometimes navigating fights. Once-children's fighting experiences reveal children's reasons for fighting, the dilemmas children faced related to fighting, and the repercussions they could face for fighting. First, John Jr.'s account plunges us deeper into this social world of once-children – this time we are provided a window into childhood pandemonium – playground mayhem. John jr. recalls his sense of responsibility to escort and protect his little sister to school. He remembers one incident where " all at once, the children started to fight. They started nailing her…." As he tells the story, John Jr.'s cadence is filled with the drama of the suddenness of the fight. His speech is a bit faster and he adds emphasis to the words "nailing her." His tone embodies a bit of the panic he felt then – the sudden uproar he felt among the little ones, as well as John Jr.'s feelings of panic, fear and responsibility to defend his crying sister in the midst.

John Jr.'s recollection of defending his sister foregrounds his decision making as it relates to fighting. John Jr. explains that initially his intent was to not fight; to only "break up" the fight. His goal was to remain uninvolved in the ruckus and to peacefully defend his sister. But amid the pandemonium John Jr. found himself pulled into the fight. John Jr.'s efforts to navigate the fight with the least amount of involvement or mischievousness centers a once-child grappling with

decision making related to fights – which in this instance was the inner moral conflict; to fight or not to fight.

John Jr. then must explain his decision making to several adults in his life. John Jr. discloses that his teacher and his mother were not the only adults he had to communicate with about the fight. Next, Mr. Locke "got word I had been fighting at school" and Mr. Locke came calling. "He come on on the horse that evening. He come on over there. *"Juney bug?"*, "Sir?", "Who you been whooping up?" John Jr. begins to reenact his conversation with his mentor, employer, and cousin. John Jr.'s voice returns to the pleading tone of a child. The tone is not desperate but rather relays a desire to be understood. John Jr. continues "I didn't whoop up nobody. A girl jumped on my little sister," and I said, "I had to get her off." John Jr. makes his case to Mr. Locke. John Jr. maintains that he did not *want* to fight, but rather he *had* fight to protect his sister from danger – getting "beat up" by the other children. At no point does John Jr. resolve that his actions were wrong for him; they were necessary as he could see no other option in that moment given what he saw as he approached the schoolhouse. A fight broke out "all at once" and his sister "was getting jumped on and crying." From his description, John Jr. was witnessing mass pandemonium and his "little sister" was vulnerable (i.e., crying and getting hit) at the center of the storm. She was going down, and he could not let that happen. John Jr.'s tone tries to relay this emotion to Mr. Locke. John Jr. caste the sentiment of Mr. Locke's response as one of understanding and guidance, "Well, sometimes you have to do that, but don't fight if you can get around it." John Jr.'s body relaxes as he reenacts Mr. Locke's last sentence on the matter. He said, "[If] Y'all cannot fight, don't."

John Jr.'s retelling of his experience having been reprimanded by the adults around him – particularly his mother and mentor, suggests he experienced being able to share his moral

thinking and receive fair, appropriate discipline. He was heard, validated, and counselled. Both his mom and Mr. Locke listened to John Jr. and validated his predicament. This is evidenced in their statements, “Now, I ain't saying I- let nobody jump on you and beat you up” and “Well, sometime you have to do that…”. These statements did not condone fighting but validated John Jr.’s sense that he had a right to protect himself and his sister. Then, both adults also reinforced John Jr.’s understanding that fighting was not right and should be avoided. This is evidenced, for example, in statements “… but don't fight if you can keep from fighting" and “don't fight if you can get around it.” Essentially, John Jr.’s fighting spirit was left intact as he was imagined as a child who could reason and draw upon his emergent moral compass to make a decision. And too, given his position as a child, who was still growing and learning –he was supported in that process. He was made to understand he was not *wrong* to fight but was taught to not choose fighting as the first answer to solve problems. Although John was counseled by caring adults, and their ideas seemed to align with his, he strongly felt that in this scenario he had no other option. His sister was being hurt. He had to help her. [287] So while the adults sought to stymie

287 This previous text might add some of this to the analysis?

On this particular school morning, John Jr. had not planned to fight. But as he recalls on this particular day, as he and his friends “[w]alk[ed] on up there [to school] … all at once, the children started fighting. They started nailing her [his sister], and she would cry, and I'd kind of break that up and got into a fight with ‘em.”

But the fight on the playground didn’t stay there. Teachers and parents got word and “Then, Momma had to go up to the school with me ... To talk to the teachers about it, you know?” John Jr. speaks to me with both conviction and conflict. His voice confirms his resolve to protect his sister but also dissonance as he recalls, as a once-child, he didn’t agree with fighting. “And- and, uh, I didn't believe in this fighting, but it was somebody who my little sister... Either one... I didn't mind fighting”. Following the fight, John doesn’t recall getting into any big trouble with his mom, instead he recalls a softer, understanding and guiding touch, “And, uh, she talked to me when I got home.” He remembers his mother’s voice and immolates her cadence in an effort to reenact the moment his mother spoke to him. His inflection goes up, "Now, I ain't saying I- let nobody jump on you and beat you up, but don't fight if you can keep from fighting." John Jr. remains with the memory of his mother allowing him to address her while simultaneously sharing his feelings as a once-child with me. In doing so, John Jr.’s voice shifts to a tone of a child expressing defiance interwoven with pleading -- both addressing his mother (then) and telling me (now), "Well, I didn't have no choice. They jumped on my little sister [he emphasizes these three words], and she [inaudible 00:13:28] were and I had to fight [emphasis on ‘had’], so I went ahead." John Jr.’s voice rises with a resistant tone on “I had to fight” but then grows softer with a tenor of submission “so, I went ahead.”

immature negotiations of conflicts and/or cultivate more adult expression of conflict negotiation both they and he acknowledged that fighting, despite it being less evolved, was sometimes warranted.

Within his reasons for fighting, John Jr. showed how he experienced having to make a difficult choice – to fight or not to fight. As a child, John Jr. faced listening to the adults for reprimand and guidance but also using his own agency to develop his own moral understandings related to fighting.

Furthermore, the playground incident and John Jr.'s moral dilemma illustrates how spaces associated with school – the walk to school and the playground – were spaces that while supervised by adults were not highly supervised. In these spaces, children were protected and supported but with less oversight. Children appeared to have a bit more autonomy over their agency to grapple with their own morals, decisions, and relationships. While adults stepped into help (i.e., principal, teacher, parents, family), this was after the child already had to decide (i.e., Juney Bug's decision to fight while approaching the playground). The school associated space afforded children some freedoms to do some decision making and growing on their own although within the safety net of looming adult eyes. In the next scene, Amanda illustrates that children's reasons for fighting were not limited to protecting someone else; fights could happen to protect yourself.

Scene IV: " Finally, One Day I Got Brave Enough to Fight Back "

Amanda McKinstry

Deloris Ransom

Billie Kennedy

William Petty

Once-children indicate they fought sometimes – not to defend others as Juney Bug had done in the previous scene – but because they felt they had to defend themselves against "bullies."[288] They also experienced being afraid of fighting – in some instances they were afraid of the act itself; in other cases, they were afraid of getting in trouble for fighting, while at least one once-child indicated he wasn't afraid of fighting or getting in trouble with adults as he maintained – *"you had to survive."*[289] Although, some once-children expressed fears of fighting, they also indicate they overcame their fears and fought back. In many instances, the bullies left them alone and sometimes morphed into friends. This next scene begins with once-child, Amanda McKinstry's memories of both being bullied and evoking self-defense.

> "But uh, um, and our neighbors, it was I think about 13 of them and it was only three of us, and when we would have to walk to the road to the bus, they were mean. They would jump on us. They would beat us, so we would have to ruuuuuunnnnn and uh, they were bullies. And they- we would have to ruuuunnnn and get past them, and then finally one day I got brave enough to fight back and they stopped doing it, you know. And then we all started to be friends."

In Amanda's scene, she states she experienced feeling outnumbered by "13" neighborhood children. Different from John Jr.'s account which depicted neighborhood children as a "crowd" of comrades, Amanda and her two friends felt surrounded by "bullies" whose mission was not to journey *with* her and her friends to school but rather to journey against them. The *13 neighbor's* goal was to "jump on" them. The threat of being hounded and jumped on incited fear and flight in Amanda. She experienced the neighborhood-children's behavior as "mean." In addition, she

[288] Amanda McKinstry, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, July 2018.

[289] William Petty, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, July 2018.

felt the children had ill intent, “they were bullies” who sought her out to fight. As she shared her memory, the energy she had to exert and the fear she felt long ago entered the interview as Amanda emphasized and elongated her words, “we would have to ruuuunnnnn… ruuunnnnn to get past them.”

Figure 28 Thought Picture. To Run or to Stand.

As Amanda talks, I imagined her and her two friends walking the path — past way points, dogging muddles or trees, only so far, before they reached the point where every day—they knew 13 neighbors would emerge. Amanda and her two comrades prepare their bodies, their hearts race, they look at each other slightly bend their bodies—brace themselves, lean forward just a bit to maximize speed and take off ruunnnnnnnnng “to get past the.” Her 13 neighbors tried to dominate the space, and Amanda and her friends tried to propel their bodies across the spot without gettin into a fight. Rather than confront the “mean” children, Amanda, and her friends first instinct was to avoid a fight by making a dash for it. She and her two buddies were outnumbered and would have to run — or would they?

But, over time, Amanda found making a dash for it did not work. They got “beat,” “jumped on,” and the children ultimately decided that was no way to live. And so, “finally one day” Amanda “got brave.” She decided to defend herself – “to fight back.” Through standing up for herself, Amanda discovered her bravery against the 13 neighborhood-kid-bullies, and it changed things. Confronting them, she stood, faced her fears, demanded respect, and she felt these actions dissipated their desire to overpower her. Instead of bullying her, they befriended her, and they "all started being friends."

Other once-children express similar quandaries with facing fears and deciding whether to fight in and around school. For example, Deloris also recalled being "picked on" the walk home from school. Deloris recalls:

> Oh, let me take that back. When I started school, and I didn't know it at the time, but, you know, me being very light and everybody else being very dark, I was picked on, but I did not realize it was a color thing. I just knew, you know, certain ones picked on me.
>
> But Momma had this thing that we couldn't fight. We better not fight [shakes her pointer finger immolating her mother's strict directive], and if we fought anybody we were gonna be beat to death. [290] And then they had this thing about the Devil, "If- if you be bad the Devil gonna get you, and you gonna go to hell, and you gonna burn in hell." They put the fear of- of the Devil, but they never put the love of God. They just said, "Be good." And so, with the fear of the Devil and Momma gonna whoop us if we fought, we didn't fight back when kids picked on us. And with me being light, I was picked on by certain dark kids.
>
> But then, one day, walking in from school, um, Ma- I don't know who among Maggie's family, but there was a bunch of the Lagrone's, and somebody in Maggie's family was picking on me, and they had a switch, and they were whooping my legs all the way to the store. And I was crying, and then I was asking, uh, and then I went to Miss Lagrone, and I just blurted out that, "Such and such whop me." The- we didn't say whip, we said whop. "Such and such whop me." And- and man [man said with a bit of drama related to Ms. Lagrone's protect, almost like a superhero swooped in], she told the person, "Don't do that, you can't do that to her." [spoken in a stern, fussy tone that mimicked the energy behind Ms. Lagrone's words]. But I never told Momma. But then another time they did it, and I turned and beat the stew outta that person [said with forceful tone], and just hoped that Momma didn't whoop me for doing it. But they didn't bother me no more after that.

Like Amanda, being "picked on" caused Deloris distress; however, she does not mention being fearful of others – at no point did she say she was afraid of the girls who picked on her. Rather, she feared her parents' disapproval and getting in trouble. Although on the walk home from school she was beyond the watchful eye of her parents, like John Jr., she grappled with whether to fight or not. She felt her mother's eyes on her as well as the eyes of the Devil. In the midst of

290 Later in the interview, I ask Ms. Deloris to clarify what she means by "beat to death". She shares that she doesn't mean someone was injured or died but more the saying reflects her experience and feelings about being hit. Specifically, Ms. Deloris states, That's just an expression. You get a whooping and you cry, and cry, and, "Shut up," and you crying and they whoop you, "Shut up." You crying and crying, "Shut up, shut up." Now how you suppose to shut up, and you getting whipped, and- and you're in pain, but they're telling you shut up. So you're trying to ... you trying not to cry so they'll quit whipping you, but you're in pain, which is making you cry, and you're trying not to cry. So that's what I mean beat to death. It's- it's just an expression. They don't beat you till you die, they just whip you till you quit crying and you try not to cry. (Laughs)"

the expectation to follow the moral demand that she not fight, coupled with the fright of punishment from her mother and the devil – she had to make a decision. As the girls "whooped" her she felt pain and vulnerability – similar to the vulnerability John Jr. witnessed happening to his sister in an early scene as she was "going down" on the playground. Here, Deloris was going down and she could feel it. The switch burned her legs and she cried. She felt forced to break the kid-code and "tattletale" to Ms. Lagrone, who protected her. But when it happened again, Deloris felt she had to put her fears aside and fight. [291] With no adult eyes on her (meaning no adults were physically there), she was able to fight back, and evade the supernatural presence of her mother, and the devil, which loomed captured her thoughts. She never told her mother, the Devil didn't tell either; and so she never got caught. While Juney Bug was edified and counselled in his tussle, Deloris was sure she would not have that same opportunity. But she felt pushed to face her fear, stood, and protected herself – which she felt – despite potential consequences – was the right thing to do.

Like John Jr. and Amanda, Deloris weighed her reasons for fighting. Like Amanda, she too was “picked on” by “certain ones." In hindsight, and different from Amanda who felt randomly selected by the bullies, Deloris felt she was singled out because of her light skin. Deloris admitted that she noticed specific youngsters would pick on her. She asserted at the time she didn’t “realize it was a color thing.” As she looked back, she thought the reason the girls picked on *her* was because of her skin color.

In-time data complicates tensions that Deloris felt may have been rooted in colorism. While this may have been true as research shows Black children (and the Black community more

291 Once-children mentioned tattle-telling and being "petted" by teachers reduced a child's social status in their world.William Petty, Oral History Interview; Doll Richardson, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, n.d.

broadly) have endured racial abuses that have caused the internalization of false social differentiations related to skin color. It would have been likely Black children may have been influenced by these social differentiations,[292] but it was also likely that these differences may not have been completely clouded their ability or desire to forge comradery with one another. In Figure 29, Deloris is posed in the center of three comrades (i.e., dark plaid dress) in her classroom at Mamiesville Elementary School. Notice she is embraced by or closely posing with girls who span a range of skin complexions – all darker than she. This would indicate that while some children picked on her because of her skin color, children also embraced one another across skin color. This observation does not deny Deloris's hunch that she may have been singled out because of her complexion, but rather to illustrate the complexity of colorism in the lives of

292 Charles S. Johnson, *Shadow of the Plantation.* (1966, n.d.); Charles S. Johnson, *Growing up in the Black Belt.*, 1941; E. F. Frazier, *Negro Youth at the Crossways*, Negro Youth at the Crossways (American Council on Education, 1940); Allison Davis and John Dollard, *Children of Bondage: The Personality Development of Negro Youth in the Urban South*, n.d.

Figure 29 Deloris Neal Ransom and three girls at Mamiesville Elementary School. Circa 1958. Photograph by Mamiesville Student, William Gore. William Gore Collection.

Black children as indicated by the photograph of Black children of various skin tones embracing one another.

The parallel of Deloris's oral history account and the in-time photo would indicate that among the children, colorism may not have been an absolute division between children but rather colorism was a complex presence fueled by a long and enduring legacy of racial oppression that, like scrimmages and tussles, were not permanent divisions or clashes. Nevertheless, Deloris's incident also illustrates how ills of the adult social world penetrated and played out in the social world of children particularly in spaces associated with school.

Social differentiations based on skin color was not the only remnant of racial oppression piercing the world of children and their conflicts, class also seeped in. While Amanda identified neighboring children as bullies, and Deloris recalled being singled out by particular girls because of her skin color, Billie Kennedy, who was the daughter of the Hopewell School Principal, Mr. Randolph, speculated she may have been picked on because of "some type of jealousy" which she associated with her clothing and her watch.

> Um, so I did get in some fights, (laughter). But, um, some of the girls were not real pleased with, uh, I guess it was a type of jealousy. So, my watch got snatched off of my arm and quite a few of my dresses were just ruined. They would catch ... we would get in line going to the restroom or going to lunch, and they would pull my, uh, sashes until they broke, or they would catch that ruffle and pull it until it came loose. And, of course, I was responsible for keeping my clothes, and my watch. So, I did get into some fights. (Laughs) But that was the reason for it, and I'm not saying that I should have done that but, uh, I think, uh, it just got the better of me. I could not just stand there and be taken advantage of like that.

Although Billie's encounter happened in school, not on the walk to school, this account provides a window into being "picked on" and getting into "some fights" to defend one's self. Like John Jr., Amanda and Deloris, Billie is also apprehensive to fighting. Not because of fear of fighting, like Amanda, or fear of getting into trouble like Deloris, but rather her belief that fighting was not something "I should have done." But like Amanda and Deloris, Billie saw reason to do so because she felt she should not have been disrespected, "I could not just stand there and be taken advantage of like that."

Like Billie, another once-child, William also experienced fighting because things sometimes came up missing at school. William described his reasons for fighting were in part to defend his "territory." He remembered:

> "It was, um, territory. Um, um, …people do take your... You know, back then, kids would steal. And you'd have a cap or something and they'd steal and, and

> take it home, and then they were dumb enough four or five days later come back wearing it- [William and I laugh]. And stuff like that and then that's a fight.

Like Amanda, Deloris, and Billie, William describes defending himself via fighting when a breaking point is reached. Like Billie, William also seemed to have experienced his property being taken by others and he saw that as grounds defend his "territory." But William's account also reveals the desires and naiveté of the children who did the stealing. First, his memory illustrates children's desire for a "cap or something" could have overpowered their moral considerations (i.e., fear of parents or the Devil). In other words, their desire to wear or have the item overtook their desire to avoid punishment. William's class status (i.e., his family owned a great amount of land and his grandmother was a respected mid-wife) would indicate that he owned things that the some of the other children did not. These items – a "cap," a homecooked lunch (i.e., Lark's greasy sack), a "sash," or "ruffle," or "watch," become symbols of class and status. As one once-child, Curly Collie, recalled about his deep desire to have a pair of "Converse All Stars," recalled, "When I got them, I just felt more better … like I could liberate and elaborate more better!"

The desire for comradery and belonging were transferred between children but were also embodied in the material they owned. Fueled by the desire for this material that signaled belonging and the ability to "liberate and elaborate" in the world of young people, "kids would steal." William pointed out, the sticky-fingered children "were dumb enough [to wait] four or five days later [and] come back wearing it." The sticky-fingered children's plans for re-entry with a higher status in school further illustrates their naiveté and desperation. As William indicates – the foolishness of their plan. It was not enough to take the item, but they *had* to wear the item at school, among their peers. This desire to wear the item in school was so strong that they disregarded the high probability that they would be noticed and caught. Clearly, these child

bandits were inexperienced – amateurish as they acted on their desires to style like William, Billie, and others whose parents could afford slightly more.

William's account illustrates how material objects embodied status and could be the source of tensions that arose between children who had and those who did not have. These materials not only embodied status but according to Curly, if you put the thing on, you could "liberate and elaborate more better." In other words, a child could feel a sense of belonging in school as well as a feeling of belonging among peers. The desire to feel elevated and a sense of liberation and belonging were normal human emotions. For a child these emotions were also associated with social dilemmas of class and oppression that were beyond any child's control. Although wrong, William's account reveals what a child might have naively felt s/he could control. This would have been a successful act to take just a little bit of class, put it on his/her head, try it on for size – wait a few days and then, launch just a little bit of liberation via a little refined cap in the byways and highways of the school halls. However, that innocent dream and naïve desire for liberation would have been short lived – interrupted by William's fist. While one child may have just been trying to feel a little freedom, William was trying assert boundaries. He would not be walked on, and his belongings would not be taken. No matter class differentiations, it wasn’t right.

This scene highlighting the voices of Amanda, Deloris, Billie, and William, illustrates how school and spaces associated with school were spaces where Black children grappled with conflicts. These conflicts included being bullied, picked on, or having had their belongings taken by other children. As Black children experienced these conflicts, they grappled with whether to protect themselves or adhere to moral norms of 'right and wrong.'

While children asserted, they believed it was not right to fight, they had agency to establish boundaries – they felt it was not okay to stand by and be a victim. Their natural desire to protect themselves activated their agency to consider whether to fight. Although able to fight – the children still grappled with what to do, their fears, and vulnerabilities. Black children feared peers picking on them, they feared punishments from their parents as well as spiritual beings. They also feared or felt vulnerable when faced with confrontation (i.e., fear of getting hit, or vulnerable to having belongings ruined or taken). Nevertheless, despite their fear and vulnerability, the children decided it was not okay to be misused and after much internal debate (and in Deloris's case the effort to get help from an adult), they decided to physically protect themselves.

Closing Remarks

Black children saw spaces associated with school as a social world where they could begin to take up their childish appetites for childhood experiences. They sought and felt comradery, relished in the opportunity to create fun – even if it were tinged with a bit of drama or friendly scrimmaging. As children took up these opportunities to play or be playful on the journey to school or the playground, they felt their childhoods happening – they felt the joy of letting loose to "just clown," the momentum or leisurely sauntering with comrades, the opportunity to connect and feeling a sense of belonging, or to relish in a little youthful drama of courting or play fighting. Taken together – it was exciting activity in an every day world that existed because of school. While these spaces were not the schoolhouse, they orbited school and but for school they would not exists in that these spaces would not have been for children. The road to school would have just been a dirt road for wagons and rust. The playground would have

just been a baron patch of land. But these rugged lands and open spaces were transformed as children descended upon them and activated them for childish endeavors.

Childish endeavors were not always fun and games – sometimes childish activity included the ruckus brought on by conflict. Black children's oral histories show conflicts meant they had to consider protecting themselves and these were not easy decisions to make. Their stories illustrate that they learned their morality was not only tied to adult expectations or spirituality but also morality was tied to their intimate experiences with right and wrong. These experiences were rooted in the every day interactions with other school children. Although all these accounts took place in spaces associated with school (i.e., the walk to school, inside school, or a non-descript school space), there is no mention of an adult presence except in the case of Deloris. Even in Deloris's account, the adult, Ms. Lagrone, did not appear to be watching the children. Deloris called Ms. Lagrone into her world. This reveals that there were spaces in or associated with school where children were directing their world – sometimes beyond the watchful eyes of adults. In these spaces, Black children had to make their own decisions related to moral and social dilemmas (e.g., adult social and status hierarchies that infiltrated and complicated their world). And, as children, they worried or were fearful about what adults might do or say when they found out.

In the next Chapter, children transition from challenging one another to challenging the schoolhouse. Children take their natural and developmentally appropriate desires to play and be playful through the schoolhouse door. Black children challenge school culture and organization as they make room for play in school by launching shenanigans that challenge adult expectations for their student roles and make room for their childhood roles to exist.

Chapter VI | School: A Stage to Perform Childhood

Introduction

A Meditation: "I liked to play."

> **I liked to play**. I- I was one of the guys that liked to play, and liked to always be funny, you know. I always wanted to be one of the funny guys, wanted people to laugh at me. I wanted everybody to like me, you know, so I did things that I thought what the other ones would like…
>
> — O'Neal Lark, Hopewell School (1963)

Like a meditation, Lark's quote is focused on one idea – a basic idea – that provides a youthful, natural, seemingly urgent, and unapologetic perspective on play. He maintains that he had a fundamental desire for and enjoyment to play. He associates play with belonging as he describes himself as "one of the funny guys." He also distinguishes himself within the group of guys by identifying himself as the one who "liked to play" and enjoyed being "funny." By *enjoying* play and *being* funny, Lark could be involved (and involve himself) in his social world of youngsters.

Like Lark, the children in this chapter desire to play – to stir things up – and like Lark, they find ways to test their freedoms to do so. Whereas Lark refers to play in a literal sense as he associates play with being "funny, and making his friends laugh," the once-children in this chapter illustrate children's childish desire for play in more expansive ways, as they leverage play to stir things up in school. Children associate school with spaces that include the playground, classrooms, hallways, or school hours more generally. Children use these school spaces to not only perform their student roles but to also perform childhood.

This chapter begins with three siblings expressing their desire to play at home. The children's play in their house serves to amplify the significance and urgency of play for the children of this study – a meditation Lark eloquently expressed in the opening of this chapter. The scenes that follow trace once-children's desires for play onto the playground, into the schoolhouse and right out the backdoor.

ACT I: Desire to Play

Scene I: "He's Still a Jokester and It was a Sweet Grass"

Paulette Locke Newberns

Paulette, Carolene, and their big brother, Thornal also liked to play (See Figure 30). Paulette describes experiencing her older brother as a *jokester*. "But my brother, Thornal, I just love him to death. And he is here[293] [at the time he was visiting Pickensville]. I wish you could meet him. He was always- always like a jokester- you know, playing tricks on me and Carolene… even today, we have to tell people, *'Don't pay him any attention, now, because he loves to joke. (Laughs).*"

Paulette's laughter draws me into her memory – a scene of her and her sister willingly and happily entangled in their brother's desire to create and wield the fun. Paulette shares, on this day in her memory, the three were at home. Thornal was "left in charge." Their play would transform their surroundings into *their* "farm." He would pull his sisters into his imagination and deeper into the world around them as he transformed himself into a farmer and the girls into

293 At the time of the interview with Ms. Paulette, her brother, Thornal Locke, was in town. They were having a family gathering. Due to a tight interview schedule with several participants, I didn't get an opportunity to interview him. Also, Ms. Paulette didn't offer which made me think he may not have wanted to interview at that time. Given my close ties with the Locke family, which have developed during this study, I hope to interview Mr. Thornal in the future.

horses. Like Lark's fondness of play and his desire to entertain his comrades by being funny, this scene shows Thornal having a similar desire. Although at home, and only in the social world of he and his sisters, he liked to play and used his imagination to connect with his sisters. He invites them into this new but familiar world. They act it out. Paulette laughed at the thought of the story she was about to share.

Figure 30 Locke children. Left to Rt. Paulette, Carolene, Thornal. Courtesy of the Michelle Locke Collection.

> Um, the one thing that, uh, Carolene and I remember the most is what he used to do like, when mom and dad would go to town. Of course, my sister that was physically challenged was there with us. We'd have to look after her, so we stayed home and l-, for that reason, also. So, mama left all three, four of us home together. Thornal, of course, was the oldest, so he was kind of in charge. But he would take it as an opportunity to, um, he liked to make things. So, we would have to become the horses.
>
> Okay. And, of course, in real life, he would have to go gather the weeds and stuff to feed the hogs and the horses. So, what he would do is, when mom would- would go to town and leave us there with him, he would tie us up- ... And put the rope on us- ... Like we were horses and like, giddy-up. You got to walk - ... Then, had to get on our floor, knees, and our hands and walk as if we were horses. And then he would get the ... It was a sweet grass- ... That he would go gather for us- ... So, wh- when (Laughs) he finished working the horses, that's me and Carleen, (Laughs) he'd say, "Get over here, horse." And he would put the pile of grass there and we would have to actually take our mouth and get down and bite the grass up. Otherwise, he got the rope and he popped you [one the word 'popped' Paulette emulates a flick of a pop and laughs like a tickled, young girl, giggling through the comedy of play).
>
> As her memory touches my own childhood remembrances of imaginative fun with friends, I laugh too, but I also say "Oh, my Lord." Paulette immediately shoots back to quell any deficit view my comment may have been insinuating.

> No, it was all fun. It was all fun. You know, he'd get a little rough with us sometime, you know. We would cry and tell mommy when she come home. But I remember those days and right now, he's my brother. I just love him to death, and he is still full of those jokes. Yesterday, as we sat on the porch- ... You know, he's still the jokester.

Paulette describes a big brother in charge: their parents were gone. She, and Caroline were in the care of Thornal. With his parents gone, he filled the space outside of school, which often would involve daily work responsibilities, with play. Weaving an imaginative world that incorporated his real-life knowledge of farming, Thornal created a reenactment of the world around him where he used play to explore being a farmer. He invited his sisters into this world as they played the roles of horses. He enacted working them and caring for them, which are roles beyond his current duties of "gathering the weeds and stuff to feed the hogs and the horses." The girls are not bothered by their role this pretending was all a part of play. They are pretending to embody the animals that are a part of their world. Evidence indicates animals were respected members of their world. Lark recalled being chastised several times by his grandfather for not respecting the mules, ""Boy, don't you get on that mule. That mule done pull the plow [all day] …." [294] Paulette's family horse, Stella, helped escort Mary to school and helped other children get to school when the weather was too bad. Although limited, many once-children make mention of mules in relation to familial work and there is some evidence to show that animals were respected and were to be cared for as a valued member of the familial ecosystem. Furthermore, as I interviewed Paulette, she wanted me to know this play was fun, as she laughs and tells me, "No, it was all fun."

294 O'Neal Lark, Interview by Kimberly Ransom, July 2, 2016, Interview 10B-Lark, transcript., interview by Kimberly C. Ransom, 2016, Interview 10B.

Paulette's experience shows Black children in an out of school space using their imagination, real life experiences, siblings, and desire to play to shape imaginative social worlds that make room for play and fun. In this world, the children spin their magic (i.e., imagination) to transform the things around them: the dirt, the grass, the people, became opportunities to imagine and transform the ordinary, everyday space of home differently, for connection and fun.

Paulette's scene illustrates how children enjoyed and took license to play outside of school. Attempts to indulge their desires to play are apparent in their efforts to be jokesters, stirring things up and reshaping everyday ordinary spaces with the imaginative worlds they attempt to create. While some attempts to transform space were unsuccessful (i.e., like Lark and the cotton ball incident in Chapter V) other attempts to transform spaces for play (like Thornal's), were launched and fully expressed. Sometimes, as these two scenes illustrate, children's ability to transform a space for play were dependent on the use of the space (i.e., labor) or rather adults' proximity to the space (i.e., Granddad working, vs. parents away on an errand and children are left in charge). Whether successful or not, children were playing with their environment and reimagining it for their childish purposes.

Although there were opportunities to play outside of school, as was the case for Paulette and her siblings, once-children indicated that school provided a more expansive space to indulge their desires to play:

> And so, uh, it was, uh, you know, it was- to be away from home, and to come here to school, it was just something that- it'd gotten to be that's something that you do. That you did- you look forward to it every day from, you know, from leaving home, going to school. And the main thing of it were- you lived in a community and, the only somebody that you had to play with was around was your sister, brother, whoever lived with you. And every night and day, and if you lived real close, you could walk to- to go down the road and go to- to the neighbor's house. But, they [parents] didn't like you walking- walking too far during that time. So you- you just at home. You know, all the time.

> So, school was a place where you came in to meet other kids from different part of towns, from, you know, some of them still live on the same road you live, but it was a mile down the road. You never get to see them unless you go to school…."[295]

Kirkland explains that school was a space that brought Black children together. Without school, the only children you had to play with was "your sister, brother" as Paulette's scene has illustrated. Kirkland argues school propelled Black children beyond their house – with school, you had a reason to get down the road – a place to go. And in that place, you could "meet other kids" – diverse Black children from "different parts of town." Without school, "you would never get to see them." Going to school placed children in a social world for children. In this world, Black children could meet and play with other youngsters. Kirkland recalls this was a space that was anticipated – "you look forward to it every day… leaving home [and] going to school." School was a space to get away from home, meet different children, and have fresh play experiences.

ACT II: Playing Ground

In the following scenes, once-children spread their frisky wings and indulge their childish desires with and among their creed – other children. These scenes provided a window into play in school and spaces associated with school (i.e., playground, spaces near school, during school time). As stated previously, scenes start on the playground, move into the schoolhouse and out the back door. On the playground, once-children are playing with abandon. They are finding and repurposing *things*: a discarded piece of cardboard becomes a sled in the summertime, a jack rock becomes a conduit to channel the sound of airplanes on high; and a hand-me-down glove becomes a tool to test strength and ignite joy. Across the scenes and in varying degrees –

[295] James Kirkland, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, July 2018.

children take liberties to imagine and create their fun. But without the buy-in of adults on the playground, the children sometimes found their efforts to launch play a bit clipped in mid-air. Nevertheless, school was a playing ground – and once-children recall embracing that ground and making every effort to have their fun take flight.

Scene I: "Got So Dirty"

Ms. Linda Smith

Linda recalls playing with her friend Bess McCrary on the playground during recess, transforming a piece of cardboard into a sled, not for snow of course – there was no snow in Alabama, but instead for dirt. Linda and Bess took to the hill behind the schoolhouse with their cardboard sled. It was a thrill. They were “sliding down the hill” and they "got so dirty” during their escapade. They were so involved in their playful romp up and down and up and down this hill that they threw respectability to the wind. In other words, the clean and neat dresses they were sent to school in were transformed into play gear – clothes that would face whatever challenges the elements of dirt would bring. The data shows the girls, full of energy and tangled in their determination to play, did not stop. They took their cardboard, took their hill, took their recess, and road it, fully.

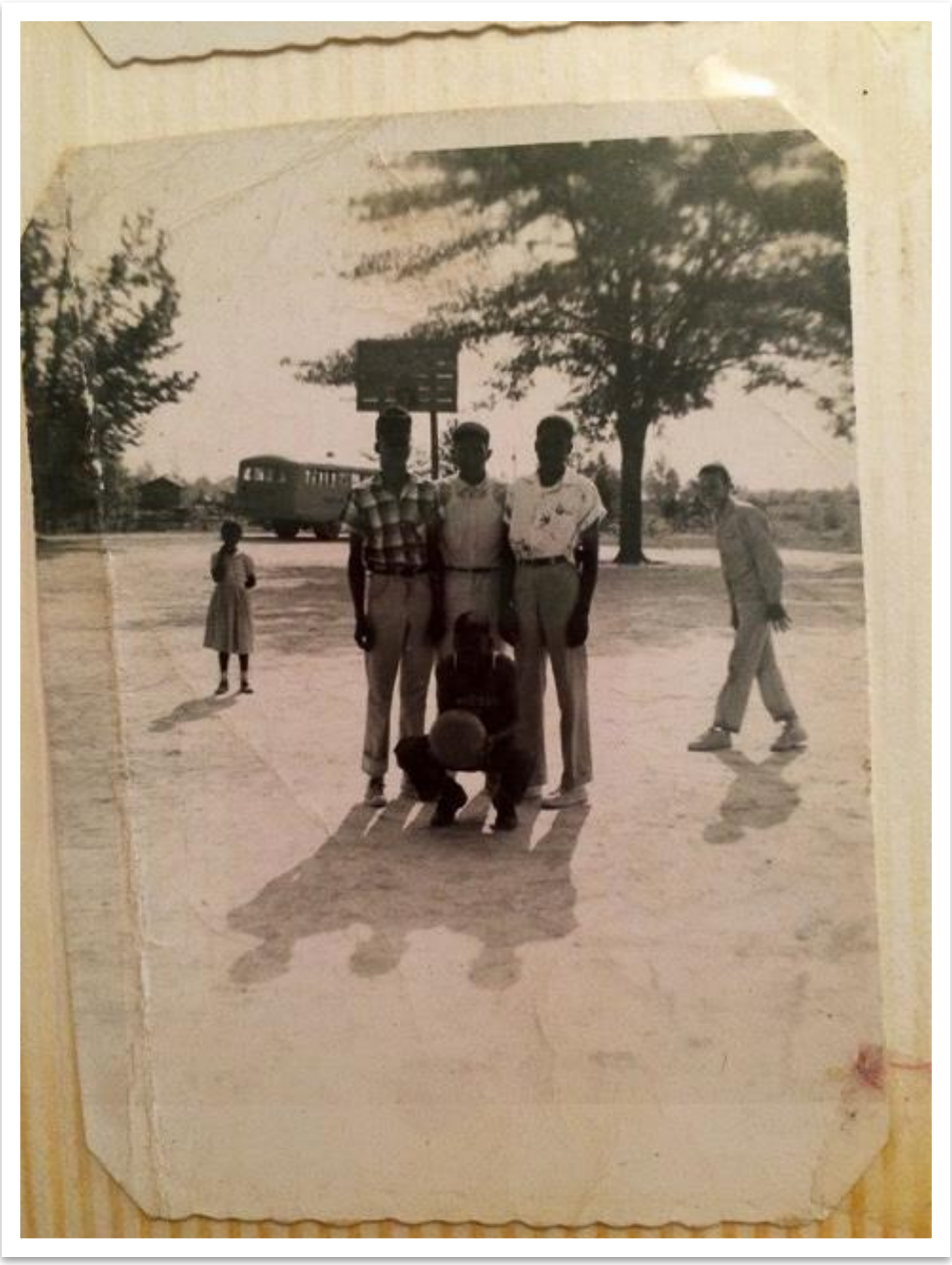
> And um, so, one play ... Well, one day, you know, when we go out, when we went out to recess, we played. And there was this big hill behind the school. And red dirt. So, we was sliding and running, uh sliding down the hill. And uh, I remember Bess McCrary and I, we were ... I think it was cardboard or something, we were sliding down the hill and got so dirty. And um, and, as a matter of fact, Bess is got, her skirt got caught on some barbed wire and just ripped it all, part of her skirt off.
>
> So, when we got back in the room, Mrs. Dubois said, "Look at that nasty underskirt." And I, here I'm a child. Of course, it's nasty! We out there sliding down a red dirt hill. I didn't come to school looking like that, you know? And she was saying, "Look at that nasty ... Oh," and oh, she was, I didn't like her, either (Laughs). So, she, she talked about my, my uh nasty underskirt and I don't think I got it dirty any more after that, 'cause I didn't like folks talking about my- Dirty

> clothes. 'Cause Momma sent me to school clean (Laughs). Um, she, and she would eat a banana and mayonnaise sandwich, and I thought that was horrible. She [the teacher] would eat a banana ... I said, *"A banana and mayonnaise? Ewww."*

Bess and Linda are full of energy. They are energized with ideas on how they can create play. The girls used a found object (i.e., material from their physical environment, likely a piece of cardboard to create their own sled. Furthermore, the girls had to envision the dirt as something to be explored, something to be embraced and frolicked upon rather than something that would make them 'dirty' and thereby something to avoid. The girls' actions to be imaginative of the world around them and using discarded material to shape that world, reveals their desire to and ability to act playful despite the absence of objects that would have invited play – toys, swings, etc.

In-time data also shows children enacting play on school grounds in the absence of play equipment (or adequate play equipment). Photographs from archival and personal collections (i.e., William Gore Collection and Rosenwald archives) rarely showed play equipment for children on the school playground. Of the 216 photographs I analyzed in the Gore Collection, only two photographs showed play equipment. Both are pictured on Mamiesville's playground. One photograph shows what looks like a homemade basketball goal (Figure 31). The other photograph shows girls posing in front of a swing set with no swings (Figure 32). Though these two photographs depict playground equipment, playing on the equipment was not central to the photographs. In both photographs the children have posed themselves with an item of play or in front of play equipment.

Figure 31 Six children on the playground. Mamiesville School. Circa 1950s. By William Gore, Mamiesville and Hopewell Student. Courtesy of William Gore Collection.



The boys position themselves in front of a basketball goal and hold a basketball in the lower center of their group, while the girls gather beneath a hollow swing set. The children's use of these props – just as Linda and her friend transformed cardboard – further evidence young people's desire to identify as children and act playfully. The children curated their photos using

pieces of material – objects that symbolized childhood – that embodied their natural right to play. The boys hold the basketball central to their bodies and although the ball is low, it creates a focal point between them. The focal point of the basketball visually defines the boys as youthful, and ready for play. Similarly, the girls gather near a swing set that has no visible swings, yet the caucus of the swing still marks their youth as swings are associated with children and play. Despite the absence of useable equipment on the playground space, children made this open space playful by using materials associated with play (and a camera) to mark their status as children.

Similarly, through Linda's memory we witness the once-girls marking their status as children. They are actively engaged in play and full of energy as Linda recalls the girls getting very 'dirty' and Bess ripping her dress. Linda's description of their "ripped" skirt," nasty underskirt," getting "so dirty," "sliding down a red dirt hill" offer a sensation of reckless abandon engulfed in play and a momentum of high activity. These terms of ripped, getting dirty, dirt, and nasty, are all things that signal avoidance in an adult world. In other words, as an adult these materials would need to be avoided as they signal discomfort, uncleanliness, and disarray.

Figure 32 Group of girls. Mamiesville Playground. Circa 1950s. Author William Gore, Mamiesville and Hopewell Student. Courtesy of the William Gore Collection.

However, as children these materials were to be tackled, relished in, and explored despite the inconvenience of 'getting dirty.' If anything, getting dirty was evidence that fun was had.

Linda recalls that her teacher did not see things their way, and Linda didn't like it. Her teacher's adult perspective clashed with the vantage and perspective of the girls. In fact, at the time (and even in hindsight), Linda felt disrespected as a child. She maintains, "Of course it's nasty! We out there sliding down a red dirt hill." In other words, we were doing exactly what children were supposed to be doing – playing. For Linda, play was the opposite of the respectable, cleanliness adults – namely her teacher and in some respects her mom – expected. Linda acknowledges that she showed up to school wearing her student clothing and thereby performing her student role: "I didn't' come to school looking like that, you know?... 'Cause my

Momma sent me to school clean." Linda, in some respects, acknowledges or affirms that as a student, coming to school she was expected to (and proud of) showing up to school neat and clean. Her neat and clean appearance signaled that she was prepared to perform her student role. But Linda resists the notion that she was supposed to stay in this student role (i.e., nice, and clean) throughout the entire school day. Some spaces, namely the playground, were for the performance of childhood – not for the performance of a pristine, neat, unsoiled student. This is evident in Linda's push back/resentment of her teacher's shaming demands to stay clean. However, as a child, Linda acquiesced, deciding to not "get dirty any more after that," not because she didn't want to continue being frisky at recess, but rather because she did not want to be made to feel or be identified as "*nasty*."

Linda and Bess's friskiness –their reckless abandon, their energy and sense of freedom to play as embodied in their getting "so dirty"—illuminates her childish desire to play and her vision of her role as a student and a child differently. Clearly, she had achieved her performance of her student role – she showed up neat and clean. But she also wanted to express her role as a child. She was on the playground, as space imagined for playing children. However, in that moment, Linda felt constrained in her attempt to express her childish whims and thereby take up her childhood status – she couldn't be free to be a child, which meant sometimes you "got so dirty" and as a child, that was okay.

Children savored the playground as a space for play – although oral history and in-time data reveals there wasn't much there to play with. Children used objects – found or incomplete – marked their childhood status therein and indeed their need to play. At the same time, the conditions of the playground – namely the lack of equipment – mark the ways Black children's childhood status was not validated in their surroundings. Furthermore, sometimes expectations

related to school norms which focused on children's performance of their student roles left children feeling their childhood desires to play were unfairly constrained by school norms. In Linda and Bess's case – limits on getting dirty equated to limits on play and thereby childhood. In the next scene, we see Kirkland also uses an object to get lost in play and like Linda and Bess, he finds his efforts interrupted as well.

Scene II: "A Jet Plane Coming Across the Wall"

Mr. James Kirkland

In this scene, Kirkland got lost in imaginative play alone. Different than the other once-children in this chapter, Kirkland describes himself as a "shy" child who "kind of stayed to myself." But staying off to himself did not mean he too didn't exercise his desire to play. His memory provides a window into his thoughts and curiosity as he solely involved himself in play on the playground. Like Linda, he found his play cut short by the presence of a teacher who misread what he was doing as mischief. But Kirkland's imaginative play provides a window into a deeply curious child who used one little discarded jack-rock to transform the playground into an expansive world of sound where he could hear airplanes.

> And I never forgot one day, uh, I was a person that kind of stayed to myself. I was always shy. I didn't play a whole lot with a lot of the kids. So, I just had stayed in my little world a lot of the time.
>
> So, I've never forgotten one day, out at lunch time, all the kids was up there playing. I didn't have nobody to play with. And I saw one of the girls had been playing with a- had jack rocks. They were playing. They left one on the ground. So, I picked the jack rock up, and this wall here- [standing on the side of Pickensville schoolhouse (See Figure 33).
>
> I started on the corner. That wall was just like the wall. Yeah, this wall right here-
>
> And, uh, so I was, you know, kind of young then. I don't know exactly what the age, but I think I was maybe in the fourth or fifth grade. So, everybody was out playing, so I just picked up one of the jack rocks and, uh, I just walked here on the wall and I just, for whatever- it just the noise- just the noise, it sound kind of like a- a jet plane. You know, just- The sound of coming across the wall.

And I just walked all the way around the school with that- that jack rock up against the school. I was just walking just like this.

Just making that noise that sounded like a plane. You could go down or you could go up and it sound just kind of like the noise a jet plane. So I was just walking around the school just like this here. Just walk around the school.

And I got about round about halfway- about along here, about middle-ways-

... And Miss Moss was sitting there eating her lunch. That was the principal.

And I could hear the window was open, and uh- I could hear her say, *"What is that noise?"* And somebody sitting there said, "*I don't know."* She said, *"Go out there and find out."* And I stopped. So, one of the kids came around the wall, there and said, "Miss Moss wants you- wanna see you."

So, I went around in the- in the room there and she said, *"Boy, what are you doing?"* [His voice captures his teachers tone which communicates her bemusement as she wondered what this child had gotten himself into] (Laughs).

INT: (Laughs).

And I said, "Nothing." She said, "What are you- you're marking on the wall?" I said, "No, ma'am." And, uh, she said, "Go out there and see if he marked on the wall." They thought I had a pencil-

... marking there on the wall. But I had a jack rock. A jack rock was a little thing that looked like a star.

It looked- jus a piece of metal, like.

But it didn't leave any marks or anything. But it was just that sound. I was just listening the sound. And so they said, no, we don't see no marks on it. She said, "*What you had?*" And I just showed her the jack rock and she said, "Don't you do that again?" (Laughs).

(Laughs).

I was so scared, I thought she was gonna whoop me. And, uh, but I just walked all the way- I come- you know, and I didn't do it again, but I started on the corner and I was just- w- walking down them boards.

INT: Mmmm (affirmative).

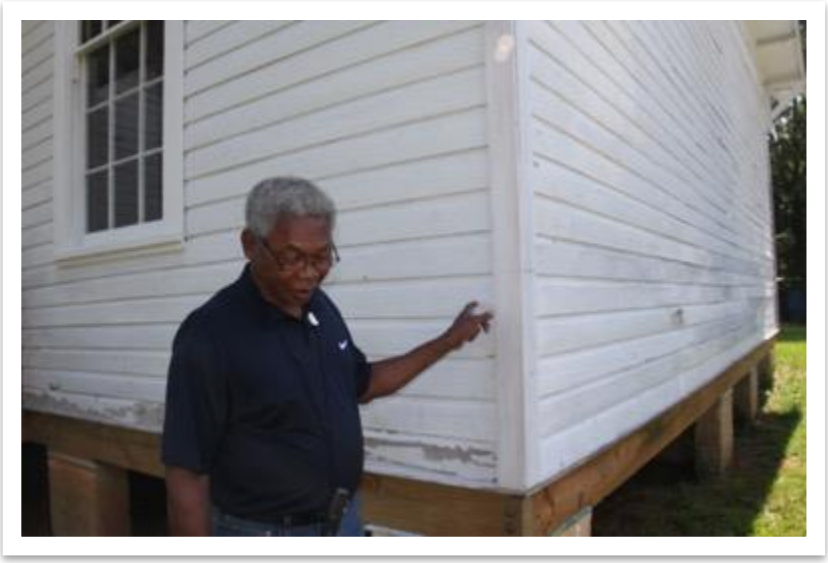
You know, they was nice boards.

And, uh, 'cause you could go up to the top of the board it would give a sound, and you could come down. So, it just sounded like the sound of a jet plane coming across the sky. And I was just walking all the way down the building.

And, uh, she got all over me about that. But, uh, like I said, uh, I think during the days, uh, right along here-

Kirkland's scene illustrates a youngster being lost in play. Engulfed in his own curiosities, he found a tiny piece of material – a "jack rock" and has imagined a use for it – an experiment of

Figure 33 Mr. James Kirkland Remembers and reenacts tracing the Pickensville School with a jack rock. Kirkland Circa 19 in a confident stance on the front porch of his home (Field photograph by Kimberly C. Ransom). Courtesy of the James Kirkland Collection.



sorts. His critical question, “What would happen if I dragged this jack rock against the side of the school building?” Suddenly, a small piece of found metal and a building constructed for learning, is now an experiment in the making. He deconstructs the objects in his mind – the jack rock becomes *"just a piece of metal, like"* and the building becomes *"nice boards."* It's as if whatever was happening on the playground had fallen away, fell silent around him, leaving him, the jack rock, the side of the building and the possibility of discovering something else – sound.

As Kirkland told me how he tested the sound he walked me through his process. As he reenacted his steps with me, he shared how he once dragged the jack rock horizontally across the building's wooden panels with the goal of cruising around the entire building (See Figure 33). He also wondered how the sound might change if he made the jack rock shift directions. Hence, he moved it vertically up, and down over the small grooves and imperfections in the wood.

Kirkland's recollection of this time on the playground paints a thought picture of a boy engaged in an exploratory trance – content with his own questions and concerned with the magical sensation of a sound, normally so far up in the air, now coming so close via his fingers,

the movement of his body forward, a jack rock, and a wooden wall. Essentially, he felt he had captured the sound of a plane in the sky.

But his world of imagination was pierced – popped like a balloon. Kirkland's experiment was infiltrated by an adult whose curiosity was not rooted in play but rather her curiosity was rooted in order. As she asked someone in her company, *'What's that noise?'* it was clear to Kirkland that she heard something different. She heard a *noise;* something disruptive and potentially problematic (but not dangerous as she sent a youngster to investigate). She could not hear the exploratory possibilities in the sound which was an airplane engine igniting between Kirkland's fingertips. But too, whoever she was with, presumably another child, couldn't hear it either. In other words, Kirkland had stirred things up for himself, scientifically playing in solitude with the questions he crafted in his mind.

On that day, Kirkland's imaginative play made it half-way around the building. One could not know if the teacher would have let him continue if she had understood what he was doing. But the moment between Kirkland and Principal Moss illustrates how order trumped exploration. As a child, when met with the tensions between order and exploration he froze. He didn't want to get in trouble. When asked, "What you had?" (i.e., what did you have and what were you doing with it?). He didn't say anything. Perhaps as a child, he didn't have the words to explain his complex work and too, it appeared fear had paralyzed him. Instead of answering his principal, he just opened his hand to reveal the jack rock and thereby to show that he didn't have a pencil. This proved that he wasn't defacing the building and therefore was not out of order. Like Linda who previously recalled being reprimanded for getting dirty, he stopped creating the sound of airplanes on the side of the schoolhouse and vowed he would not play (in that way) again.

Kirkland's scene illustrates how he used play to innocently indulge his curiosity in the technical world around him (i.e., airplanes and sound). The scene also reveals his vulnerability as he cowered to his principal's inquiry for fear that he would get into trouble. While he was brought to order, his curiosity and agency to explore his curiosity was interrupted.

Scene III: "Some Hand-Me-Down Boxing Gloves...A Show Day Sure Enough"

Willie Howard

As a boy, Willie he experienced the liberty to play around with testing his strength via a boxing match on the playground. Recall, Willie has mentioned fights before. Previously, in Chapter V, he and a classmate had a scrimmage where they "got in a boxing match." This is another match – but this time the kids have a piece of material to up the ante – boxing gloves. Furthermore, unlike Linda and Kirkland's escapades, Willie's match goes uninterrupted as a teacher – rather than calling the game to order – gets involved. He plays too.

> The other one was we had some boxing gloves. Somehow or another we got some hand-me-down boxing gloves. Some, some official boxing gloves. And we went out on the playground one time and the teacher asked us *"today anybody wanna, wanna try out these boxing gloves."* And of course, I did.
>
> And those things was so heavy, I could barely pick him up. So me and one of the guys that live- that went to school, uh, from the Hughes community put on a pair. Everybody formed this big circle and we got out in the middle of it and we were throwing punches and I got tired (laughter). And he would throw a punch and he and I have to rest a while. Then he would throw a punch and he ... It was a fun- and everybody was laughing, the teacher was laughing at us, we had those big gloves (laughter). But anyway, that was, that was a show day sure enough. We had- all had those boxing gloves on. You know certainly, we didn't get hurt because they were soft. Yeah. And no matter how hard we hit each other, it wasn't, it was no injuries. But that was, that was, that was what happened there. That was uh, probably sixth grade, maybe six, six or seventh grade.

In Willie's scene he and a friend's desire to play is ignited by an object – boxing gloves. Although these gloves were a second-hand resource (e.g., "hand-me-downs") their excitement was not quelled. These gloves were "official" an anomaly – hard to come by and therefore a

great find full of potential to be a catalyst to stir things up. The boxing gloves were a call to test their strength, to engage their sportsmanship, to pull a crowd and to have fun. All the teacher had to do was ask, "anyone wanna try out these…?" The invitation was accepted with an urgent delight as Willie recalls "of course!"

As Willie dove into the boxing-glove experience, he began to feel the frailty of his own body as a youngster. He recalls the gloves were "so heavy" they weighted down his otherwise eager arms – he "could barely pick them up." As he and his buddy suited up with hands weighted down, the audience of peers took notice and gathered around. The invitation, the exuberance, the boxing-gloves (i.e., foreigners in the middle of this playground in rural Alabama) were a recipe for stirring things up. "Of course" they stepped into the middle of their circle of peers and of course they beckoned their little arms to lift their heavy hands and prepared for battle. They "threw punches." Not quite like professional boxers of their time, but the effort was there. Mr. Howard laughs at his younger self (who he recalls was also laughing at the time) as his arms just could not keep up with his desire for big-boy strength and his will to test his physical power. He "threw punches," he "got tired," he threw again." The gloves were forgiving –"soft" and so no matter how "hard [the boys] hit each other, there were no injuries." Still, the soft gloves were an opportunity for Willie to pretend to be hard – to imagine his body as a force and to test it against his comrade. The gloves, the boys, the game, was a tantalizing spectacle that everyone gathered around for: it was "a show day sure enough," even if the show had to stop and rest between throwing punches.

The excitement that everyone gathered around for was broken up by the innocence and vulnerability of the boy's young bodies. Small in stature (as evidenced by the heaviness they felt wearing the gloves) but big in heart (as they threw punches, tired, rested, and threw again), the

boys were anxious to be full-sized in their performance of strength. Developmentally, they were not quite there. Making for an anticlimactic show which created humor for all. The fun – the drama of it all – was in the aspirations of the heart and the freedom to try.

Although the boys' sheer desire certainly curated this fun, the freedom to try was underwritten by their teacher. According to Willie, the teacher made room for the children's scrimmage by introducing the exciting piece of material (e.g., "*official* boxing gloves") along with an invitation to "try out" the gloves. The teacher's invitation was also a show of support and protection. He is supporting the boys desire to test their strength and constructively channel fighting through sport. He is likely standing by to be sure that no one is hurt. But too, he is supporting and protecting the boy's desires to be boys, friskily testing one another, and amusing one another in the form of a scrimmage. He joins the fun as evidenced by his laughter. He was not just chaperoning - he is playing too. Even amid taking on a protective and supportive role, Willie's scene shows how children's friskiness transformed space, calling adults into their performance of childhood and in doing so – joy.

In the following scenes, we transition from the playground into the schoolhouse. Inside, children launch a myriad of shenanigans that pushed against the normative use of school spaces. Doing so, afforded them further opportunities to perform childhood.

ACT II: Playing Room

The schoolhouse shenanigans illustrate how the children reclaimed and transformed school spaces for their own playful purposes. This next scene demonstrates the reclamation and transformation of school corridors.

Scene II: He'd Catch You in the Hallway

Herbert Hughes

Herbert Hughes, once-child of Hopewell school, recalls Mr. Randolph, the school principal, providing discipline and wisdom as he waded through the children in the hallways. As Herbert walked through his own memory, he appeared to be both tickled and grateful for Mr. Randolph's presence and warm but firm care.

> Because he [the principal, Mr. Randolph][296] was the, uh ... And he did a lot for that school. [H]e kept us straight and he did what he was supposed to do. I'll put it just like that. You know, he, he was a disciplinary and he'd catch you in the hallway, you're not supposed to be there, and he would, you know ... (Laughs) 'You can't do that now, understand?' But, you know, at that time he taught us, 'hey, be where you're supposed to be....' You're supposed to be in your classroom. The hallway was a space where kids could become crooked – meaning veering away from the focus they needed to be students, which included getting to class on time. And so adult guidance was needed.

Herbert's description of guidance he and others received from Mr. Randolph (See Figure 34) included care and teaching that considered the student's status as children.[297] For example, his recollection of Mr. Randolph's use of the words "right now" would indicate that Randolph was not saying Herbert and his comrades were forbidden from performing childhood in school, they just couldn't do it "right now" – now (i.e., the time allotted to change classes) was a time to

[296] At the time of my interview with Mr. Hughes, the Hopewell Alumni Association was working to establish a monument in Mr. Randolph's honor – they wanted to name the school gymnasium for Mr. Randolph. They secured the dedication and held the naming ceremony in 2017.

[297] For more on the care of Black teachers in Black segregated schools (including Rosenwald Schools) see Siddle Walker, Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South.

perform their roles as responsible students. Performing the role of a responsible student meant, "be where you're supposed to be." Herbert speaks of these types of encounters with Mr. Randolph as a discipline but also learning experiences. Mr. Randolph was telling them to get to class, but he was also teaching the importance of responsibility to "be where you're supposed to be." Also, Mr. Randolph's assertion, "You can't do that now, understand?" left room for play. Although he indicated now was not a time to play, his use of the word 'now' suggests there would be other times when the children could frolic freely. His directive was also teaching children to learn to "*understand*" the difference.

Figure 34 Hopewell School Principal, Mr. Randolph sitting at his desk. 1963 Hopewell Annual. Geraldine Finch Brooks Collection.

Children getting crooked in the hallways wasn't always related to the responsibility of getting to class on time. And although teachers, like Mr. Randolph held a strong presence, they couldn't always monitor everything. Sometimes children's childish efforts to push boundaries went unseen and thereby unchecked as children navigated spaces beyond the watchful eyes of adults. Linda Smith's scene below illustrates the crowded hallway had the potential for some mischief to go unnoticed.

Scene III: "Come on Now! That was Not Nice."

Ms. Linda Smith

In 1967, Linda was a majorette at Hopewell School. In other areas of her life, Linda admits as a brown skinned girl, she felt inadequate – unpretty. She felt her younger sister, who was much lighter, received preferential treatment by her brothers because she was light. Specifically, she felt they looked out for their younger sister more, protected her more, and she attributed this to her sister's lighter skin. Nevertheless, in school, Linda took on roles that would indicate that she did not let her hurt related to skin color diminish her desire to explore and perform her childhood. In Linda's scene, she is a majorette at Hopewell High. As a majorette, she had the opportunity to perform in the much celebrated, May Day. May Day was a grand and revered day. Across the data, participants mention May Day as having been their favorite day of celebration at school. The May Day Celebration was described by the children as "…a day of relaxing and having fun, laughing, and playing."[298] At the celebration there would be "all kinds of games, line dancing…" and a festive ritual entitled "Wrapping the May Pole" (See Figure 35 for a rememory of wrapping the May Pole during the May Day Celebration). [299]

This annual celebration was etched in the memories of all participants. Linda remembers herself walking down the hall in her majorette uniform on May Day. We can imagine how Linda might have felt as she strutted in her majorette costume. Perhaps she was feeling beautiful,

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[298] Janie Bell Curry-Sherrod, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, n.d.; Ethel Grice, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, July 2018.

[299] Grice, Oral History Interview; Curry-Sherrod, Oral History Interview; Janie Lee Currington, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, April 2015; William Petty, Oral History Interview; Deloris Neal Ransom, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, n.d.; McKinstry, Oral History Interview.

feeling like an ambassador of the culture and celebration of her school as she prepared to perform. Maybe she felt all eyes on her as her costume would surely have drawn the attention of the other students. Although she felt beautiful, maybe also she felt nervous – wanting her comrades to also see her brown beauty and her leadership as a cultural performer. But what Linda recalls is a sudden interruption in her movement through the Hopewell hallway as a beauty and an entertainer. Linda was met with childish, inappropriate expression of attraction launched by a boy who noticed her, mostly like thought she was beautiful, and launched an immature flirtatious gesture that left Linda feeling disrespected.

> Um, I was a majorette. Um, uh, I remember one, one day, it was May Day. We were, we were walking down the hall, and I [was] walking to the girls' bathroom, and, and as I went around the curve, somebody grabbed my, right here- [touches hip and frowns]. Grabbed my hip. And, and when I looked back, I, I don't know who it was 'cause the hall was full of- [students] And, you know, that w- that was horrible for me [Linda's gives a look of disbelief]. I'm saying, "Come on, now." I never to this day knew who it was. I don't know who it was. He, he, he just, you know how- 'Cause you had on, I had on that little, short dress. Uh, skirt. Uh, he was trying to flip- [my dress up]. So um, you know, that, that's, that was not nice.

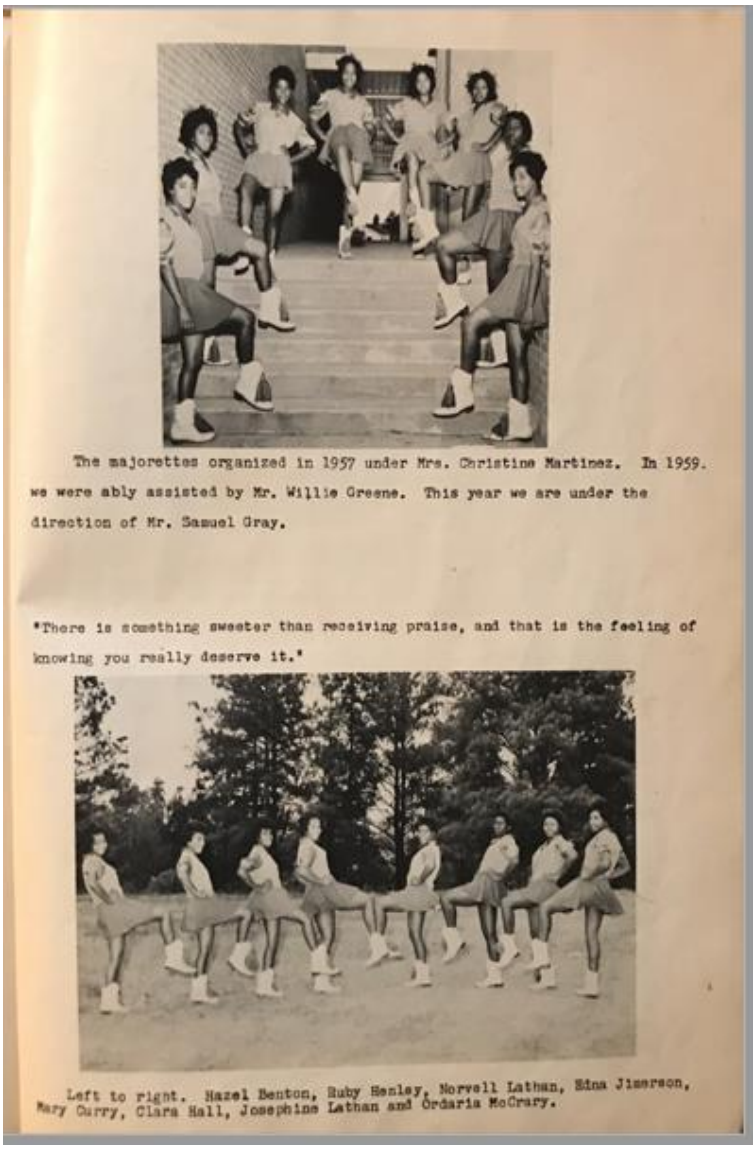
Figure 35 Thought Picture of Wrapping the May Pole. Deloris Neal Ransom, Mamiesville School. Circa 1957.

" [W]rapping the maypole was something that we did, um, every spring, summer, s- it was wa- very warm out. And it was a, a festive activity, and, uh, wrapping the maypole, everybody had these different colorful streamers, and you sang the song, and you went in and out, weaving in and out. And when you finished the maypole was wrapped with this, um, with these streamers. And then there was a May queen, uh, which was all part of that festive thing. And I was May queen one or two times. Um, and that's, that was a happy time."

Linda's scene demonstrates how hallways were a place where children could feel seen and represent their school leadership roles. Here, Linda is dressed in her majorette uniform, strutting the halls on a day of school celebration embodying beauty and style. Like the 1963 Hopewell Majorette team (See Figure 36), Linda sported her "little, short skirt," matching blouse and her little pom-pom boots accented by fluffy tassels that would toss when she graced the school halls.

As the in-time photograph shows, Linda would have been a vision and her position as a majorette was also carrying on a tradition that started only a decade before she began school at Hopewell. As a majorette she embodied beauty, class, and school culture. The position also gave her an opportunity to hold a distinguished role in representing her school. Yet, Linda's elevated social position as a Hopewell majorette did not make her immune to the silly and immature flirtatious actions of boys. As Linda noted, in the crowded hallway, a boy took the opportunity to

Figure 36 Hopewell Majorettes, Hopewell Owls Annual (1963). Geraldine Finch Collection.



The majorettes organized in 1957 under Mrs. Christine Martinez. In 1959. we were ably assisted by Mr. Willie Greene. This year we are under the direction of Mr. Samuel Gray.

"There is something sweeter than receiving praise, and that is the feeling of knowing you really deserve it."

Left to right. Hazel Benton, Ruby Henley, Norvell Lathan, Edna Jimerson, Mary Curry, Clara Hall, Josephine Lathan and Ordaria McCrary.

flip her skirt. There were no adults in sight and the boy disappeared into the crowded hallway unchecked.[300]

Other oral-history data indicated if the boy had been seen by a teacher or administrator, like Mr. Randolph, his childish flirting would have been deemed inappropriate, and he would have been reprimanded. For example, O'Neal Lark recalled a similar incident where he touched a girl's knee in class and was quickly chastised.

> … Mr. Du Bois, he didn't [play], uh, he'd call you a little stinker, *"All right, little stinker, come here."* You know.
>
> The first day of class, of tenth grade, we was sitting in the classroom, on the first day, the very first day of class, tenth grade, I'll never forget it, a girl named Hazel Benton. Nice looking girl. I wasn't trying to feel her leg or anything, it was a fly on her leg, and I was trying to get the fly off her leg. So she says, *"Leave my leg alone!"* Mr. DuBois heard this, *"Come here, boy."* And he set me on his desk, and he slapped me across my legs while I was sitting on that desk, and that's why I never forget that. And he always, he used a little rubber hose, a little, clear rubber hose, and that's what he would do that.
>
> And, and, and it was, uh, that was one of the things, that was only time that I could remember getting in trouble at school. Because my parents and grandparents didn't allow us to, *"You go to school to learn. You don't go to school to get in trouble."* You know, that was the only thing that I was, uh, [the way] I was raised up… .

Unlike the boy who flipped Linda's skirt and disappeared into the hallway crowd, Lark got into trouble on the spot. Unlike O'Neal, the boy who flicked her dress was not attempting to swat flies, he, albeit inappropriate, was childishly and immaturely flirting or expressing boyish romantic attraction. Linda felt offended and was dismayed the boy vanished and was never corrected on his immature behavior. There was no one to hold accountable, no parents to call,

[300] Other data indicates that if the boy had been seen, he would have been reprimanded and it would have been a serious offense. O'Neal Lark recalls an incident where a girl thought he was trying to touch her knee, but he was trying to shoo a fly. He got into big trouble. His parents were called, and he had to meet with the principal. O'Neal reported that although he made an innocent gesture, going forward he didn't try to protect girls knees from flies anymore.

and no principal meeting. Linda was left feeling disrespected. Her statement, "Come on, now" indicates that she understood the hallway was a world, where she and her comrades could engage in playful behavior – but "now" this silliness was too much and beyond the rules. Even as a child, she wanted to establish boundaries. While the crowded hallway created an opportunity for students to engage in childish shenanigans, push against the expectations of adults, without being seen – as a child, she felt there were still rules for engagement. That boy should have "been kept straight." Meanwhile, the boy who quickly flipped Linda's skirt and vanished most likely knew he a chance. He risked being seen and punished by adults who monitored the hallways. Children's risk-taking in the name of playing in school did not stay confined to the hallways. In the following sections, children illustrate a myriad of ways they took risks to have fun and push boundaries right in school. In the next scene, Herbert and his friends explore their playful fondness for the girls more directly. Sometimes it occurred in the classroom rather than the corridor.

Scene IV: "Because the Girls Were There"

Herbert Hughes

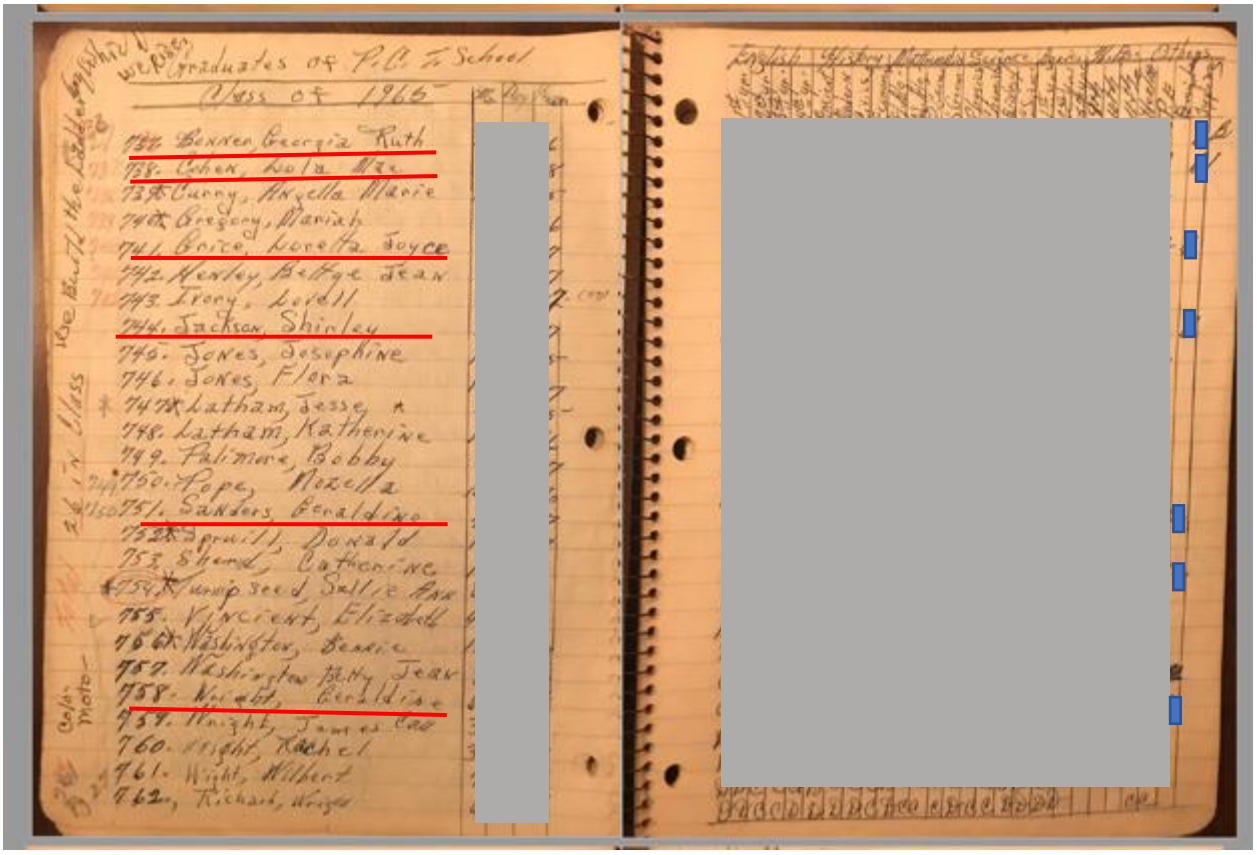
Herbert reflects upon the antics he and his friends would launch in school. Specifically, his memory takes him to a typing class he, his buddies and several girls completed at Hopewell. The boys and girls were juniors and seniors. Herbert's future wife was among the young ladies, although he did not know it at the time. Herbert recalled he and his friends knew they wanted to be near the girls and to do so, the boys decided to register for typing class. Typing class was where the girls were. His recollection of typing class does not reminisce on the academic experience of learning to type. Instead, his memory takes him to the young fun he and his comrades generated as they found a way to relish in their desire to be near the girls.

> And there we are, set up in the classroom 17, 18 years of age. She's only two years old[er] [Herbert's face shines with delight and he laughs as he makes mention of the girl who would later become his wife].
>
> Me, James, and Robert, Jr. we would sit back there in the back in the ty- ... We all got in typing class because the girls was there [He laughs again, totally tickled at he and his friend's antics to wiggle their way in closer proximity to the girls].
>
> And we'd sit back there in the typing class talking about what we did the night before [chuckles again, full-bodied and enjoying his own memory]. And then, so my wife ... Well, she wasn't my wife, my girlfriend then, and her three friends, they beat me up! Tore my shirt up! Herbert laughs again, seemingly unable to contain his enjoyment of revisiting the memory.
>
> As I tried to envision where this tickling of a beating by the girls took place, I had to ask Mr. Herbert, *"Wait. Why'd they'd beat you up? [Did] they beat you up in class? On the way to school?"* We were back there talking about ... They overheard us ...Talking about the girls. That- who [we] was out with [the day before]. And so, they beat me. (Laughs)
>
> And then, you know, I wasn't that good at typing. I just didn't have any interest in it in the first place, you know – ASDJKL—and all that good stuff. You, you can control this thing... Now, I wished I had a went on and did what I was supposed to, even back in the 50s. And [then] my keyboard skills would have been a whole lot better. After I got in the Army and became a first sergeant, I had to sit down and, we had typewriters then, I had to sit down there and type all these efficiency reports and, and, um, you know, ... They are going to affect their careers. You know what I'm talking about?

Herbert's recollection of shenanigans in his typing class reveals he and his friends sophisticated use of maneuvering a system of school (i.e., registering for class) to plan fun. Instead of using the course registration processes to perform their role of student – selecting courses based upon academic interests, practicality for developing employment skills, or core requirements, the boys utilized the system to design their own social world to play. Boyishly, they wanted to be close to the girls and the girls were taking typing. Mr. Herbert indicates he had no interests in typing, "I just didn't have any interest in it in the first place, you know – ASD…JKL..." He also admits he didn't experience being very good at typing.

In addition to abandoning their own interests and signing up for typing, to be close to the girls, the boys may also have also abandoned gendered norms associated with learning to type.

Figure 37 Pickens County Training School Gradebook 1925 - 1969. Pickens County Training School Librarian, Henrietta Wilkinson Collection.



Although Mr. Herbert does not mention gendered constructions with regard to who was expected to take typing and who was not, how typing may have been perceived for boys verses for girls, the Pickens County Training School gradebook (See Figure 37) suggests the majority of students enrolled in typing courses were girls. For example, the Pickens County Training School Gradebook (1925 -1969) illustrates the gendered characteristics of typing courses. It appears typing courses did not start at PCTS until 1965. Previously, it appears girls enrolled in "home economics" courses. Figure 37 shows that seven students were enrolled in typing class and all

enrollees were girls.[301] On the other hand, the gradebook shows boys were involved in agriculture courses.

This evidence indicates that there may have been gendered norms associated with course selection. The group of boys' desires to be near and socialize with the girls in class – trumped gendered social norms associated with course selection. The boys were willing to abandon gendered norms, and risk how they may have been socially perceived for choosing typing.

But too, the boys were together and being together created group play that may have trumped any gender norms associated with course choices. In other words, the boys *were* in typing – but they were not there to *participate in* typing. The boys joined typing, but they defined their own reasons, *"Because the girls were there…"* and rules for being there, "…we'd sit in the back there and talk…," they could have possibly come away appearing socially cooler, rather than faced any backlash for taking typing. In short, the boys redefined the space and they were not *taking typing*, typing class was a space to launch their real play mission – to get next to the girls.

According to Mr. Herbert, getting close to the girls in class was a dance of friskiness, delight, and episodes where the girls kept those boys in line. His description (and laughter) of his friend and he talking – perhaps whispering but within earshot – in the back of the class, being overheard by the girls – who then retaliated with a "beating" appears to have ignited the delight the boys needed. Although Herbert does not go into detail, he provides a glimpse into youthful drama. The boys were talking about other girls they had hung out with the day before, and the

301 In Figure 15 I have shaded student's personal information which includes data of birth, and grades. The names of students who enrolled in typing class are underlined in red. I was able to determine which students were enrolled in typing class by tracking on student grades. On the far right of the figure, blue boxes in the column titled, "Typing," cover student grades. These grades provide evidence for which students in the class of 1965 completed typing class. I was able to cross reference students typing with the corresponding name listed on the left. Again, the students who completed typing – which was seven girls – are underlined in red.

girls in typing class did not like it. While it may seem harsh for the girls to physically beat the boys, and tear Herbert's shirt, he laughs and speaks of the incident fondly. His demeanor coupled with the story illustrates youthful drama, fun, tensions, operating in the social world of children. The boy's innocence and naivete of foregoing their own academic interests to take typing class, foregoing gendered norms, foregoing classroom norms of being quiet/paying attention just to get a little more time to play – to be frisky, to be light-hearted, to chit chat, to be lively and to get the attention of a crush as evidenced by his sheer delight when these efforts were met with the girls' attention – even if was a beating and a ripped shirt.

In hindsight, as an adult, Herbert wishes his youthful self could have seen the big picture – which for him was the value of that typing class. He recalls at the time; he just was not interested. But little Herbert did not see the value of typing in the future. Although he may have envisioned himself years later in the military, he could not foresee that as a first lieutenant in the Army he would meet "*ASDKL*" again as he struggled to type reports. His reflection on his lack of awareness as a youngster illustrates his naivete or unknowingness. Specifically, his unknowingness illustrates how a 17 - 18-year-old performing childhood in the *now* may not envision or make connections with his future self in tangible ways that apply directly to his academics (i.e., course choices, or classroom performance). For once-child Herbert and his comrades' school was also a space to play, to enter and shape a social world to childishly explore romance in this case. The girls were not just in the hallways, or on the school grounds, the girls were in typing class and *because* the girls were there – typing was everything. In short, the classroom could be imagined more expansively, beyond its academic utility and become a stage to act on boyish yearnings to be near and further explore lighthearted connections with girls.

But children of Pickens County did not only play in the name of romantic interests, they also played in direct opposition to school authority - to rebel against the teacher, or to wiggle their way out of course work. The scenes below demonstrate children's experiences using shenanigans to achieve these desires.

Scene VI: "Did Somebody Get Out That Window?"

Doll Richardson

In this scene, a boy named Ben,[302] uses shenanigans as an opportunity to prank the teacher – essentially having fun at the teacher's expense. Particularly, Doll recalls watching on as Ben uses his wit and youthful ability to catapult his body - leaping in and out of the classroom window – essentially playing with the teacher's perception while humoring his friends. Doll and other children did not remain innocent bystanders. As the teacher tried to catch on, Ben's comrades, including Doll, became accomplices in his play – watching Ben's fun, and not tattling on him when questioned by the teacher. The excitement of this scene has remained in Doll's memory and surfaces in her interview.

> And did [I], uh, let me tell you about uh, Ms. Stevenson. Oh, with her loudmouth [Doll frowns] *" he was sitting there?" [*Doll's face seemingly annoyed at the memory of this particular teacher]. One day, the Petty[303] boy jumped out the window, and he- and y'all- "Oh look out the window." She [Ms. Stevenson] said, *"Did somebody get out that window?"* Me and Tricia Ann was sitting there. She said, "… did somebody get?" [Doll mimics the teacher's confusion] Tricia Ann was petted [i.e., a teacher's pet]. And I was reading something, and she said, *"Did y'all see that?"* And we said *"No."* He jumped back in the window, jumped back in the chair. She said, *"You weren't sitting there while ago. Where did you come from?"* He said, *"Yes Ma'am." [Doll then mimics Ms. Stevenson's voice again] "Richardson." "Yes Ma'am, he was here, sitting here all the time."* Ben Robertson though, he was so stupid.

302 Doll refers to "Ben" as the "Petty Boy" in her dialog.

303 Although the boy's name was Ben Robertson, he belonged to the Petty family. For example, his mother may have been a member of the Petty family, although her married name was Robertson [check with Doll].

Interviewer: And what was he doing, just playing?

Yeah, he was jumping out the window.

Doll's memory of play in the classroom illustrates children finding moments to transform, albeit briefly, (or expand) the classroom space into a stage for play. Doll's memory begins with a teacher who clearly was not her favorite. At least two other once-children in the study have made mention of Ms. Stevenson. Their descriptions depict Ms. Stevenson as a strict disciplinarian who they considered to be "mean."[304]

Ben's scene as told by Doll, demonstrates how outsmarting and getting caught becomes another level of fun. Ben's physical movement – leaping out and in the window—physically parallels the quick wit children employed using shenanigans to humor their friends and push boundaries with the teacher – but also entering a dance with the teacher – a dance of *maybe you'll catch me, maybe you won't* and that too is play. Launching a shenanigan of this kind, and either successfully getting away with it, or not – was tricky business and thereby another opportunity for fun. Part of the fun was crossing boundaries and the suspense surrounding whether he would be caught. For Ben, the fun is not just the action of jumping in and out the window, the fun is propelled by Ben's dance with the teacher. She wants order and he pushes to expand classroom norms to express play. Within this tension, fun is created. Can Ben avoid getting caught? Can he be quick and agile enough where the teacher will not see him leap out the window, but slow enough where his comrades can get a good laugh? Or can Ben outsmart the teacher by depending on the code of his comrades to not tattletale? His audience of comrades must be wondering (and Ben too), who will win this game; Ben or Ms. Stevenson?

[304] McKinstry, Oral History Interview; Geraldine Finch Brooks, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, July 2018.

Ultimately, Ben used wit to shape this classroom drama . For this amount of fun and suspense to work, Ben would need an antagonist, which he has – a teacher who, in class, enforced student performance (i.e., order) and quelled the performance of childhood. He is the main actor, taking center. While both Linda and James felt their desire to play was restricted as teachers held tight to norms related to order (i.e., 'don't get dirty,' and 'don't pencil the building'), there is evidence that once-children were successful in pulling off their play and in at least one case, pulling teachers into it. Ben provides evidence of one such classroom case, for a quick moment, he lets his childishness burst forward – momentarily redefining the space – for play, fun, innocent frisky tricks – and then he bounces back into his seat, shapeshifting the classroom back to his performance of student. Ben's seated body commands his casts of children. The Teacher's Pet is still. Doll is reading. All is quiet. I imagine there are giggles, and smirks struggling to stay still, and hearts pounding with anticipation – as young minds wonder, '*will Ben get away with this?'* The teacher is bewildered, and turns to the children for help, *"Did y'all see that?"* but in that moment, the young ones are not *her* cast of students, they are Ben's cast of children engaged in childhood. And so, his comrades covered for him, claiming they had seen nothing. The drama of childhood antics has succeeded, and the classroom was expanded just a little. Fun was had and etched into memory – and in its recounting provided me as the interviewer and you as the reader a thought picture of a time when Ben took his chance to be fun, silly, and free in a space otherwise designed to be serious, focused, and astute. On that day, Ben Robertson won the dance with his teacher and effectively launched the fun he intended – with the help of a few friends.

Ben's shenanigans illustrate, the presence of Ms. Stevenson did not curtail once-children's play. Rather, Doll's memory only further illustrates children's commitment to play despite their

teacher's efforts to keep order in the classroom. The children's commitment to play is apparent in the children's willingness to enact, support, and protect play as demonstrated by Ben's jumping out the window, and other children's refusal to tattletale on Ben. Instead, they watched, pretended to read, sat silent, and when asked – fibbed to protect Ben from punishment. In this moment, the classroom norms were pushed, play shined through – and won. In the next scene, Willie Earle Henley illustrates how children engaged in various shenanigans to get temporary relief from their student roles in the classroom.

Scene VII: "Then, You Could Get Off Work, Just One Period."

Willie Earle Henley

While in the previous scene Ben sought to rev things up in the classroom, Willie's scene illustrates students launching shenanigans to try to wind things down. In his scene, kids launched shenanigans right in class without much resistance from their teacher. Ultimately, the children transformed the classroom into a space for temporary rest from academic work and free communication with their teacher. While Willie thought he and his colleague's witty diversions successfully freed them to "get off work," this could also be interpreted as class time that the teacher was willing to devote to play. Either way, Willie Henley's scene illustrates once-children's efforts to expand the classroom norms to include relaxation.

> But- and there was some teachers I didn't get along with. [But] uh, there was Mr. Howard, he was, he was all right. Most, most times somebody would get him started talking about the army and then and you could sleep that whole period (Laughs).
>
> INT: I wondered and asked Mr. Willie, "So was that on purpose? And how would it start?"
>
> Most of the times it was. I don't, I don't know, it would get started by somebody bringing up something about the war, or something. And he would start talking because he was in the army so he would talk about the army. But uh. War, that what he, he was gone [talk about]. Yeah and that, that meant we could get, get off, get off work just one period of just sitting there [dramatic pause] looking [laughs].

While Mr. Willie admits there were teachers he "just didn't like," Mr. Howard "was all right," seemingly because Mr. Howard was willing to relax the norms of student performance in his classroom by allowing the conversation to divert away from the lesson to other topics, which Mr. Willie recalls were related to war and the Army. Willie experienced this diversion as a break for "just one period" – a relief or respite of sorts – from the rigor of his student role. And he achieved this end by “playing with” his teacher.

While this may have come as a relief for all students, students may have experienced and enjoyed this 'break' in a myriad of ways. For example, in his interview, Hopewell student, Johnny Benton mentioned having great anxiety in class. As a sharecropper's child, he missed a lot of school and was always behind. He recalled:

> [W]hen I get to school, sick to the stomach, inside, so you know. Going into school, I did not have homework. Uh, sometime the teacher would tell you to go down in the woods and get some wood to make a fire. I was glad to do that to get out the classroom and stuff like that, you know.

For Johnny and others like him, Mr. Howard's break may have been a welcomed relief from tensions children felt related to academic performance. Other students could have viewed these detours as a fun opportunity to kick off banter between the teacher and students. Once-child JoAnn Lark recalls these detours from the lesson rendered Mr. Howard's classroom as *"the fun class."* She states, "Mr. Howard was the fun class. Of Course, all you had to do was start talking about sports with Mr. Howard and he was right there with you in everything." JoAnn's experience was not related to stories about war (like Willie), nor did she see it as a time to put her head down for a nap. She recalls conversations about sports which she experienced as "fun" because Mr. Howard would be "right there" in the conversation with the kids. Her terminology, "he was right there with you," suggests Mr. Howard would be just as caught up in the sports talk

as the youngsters. This echoes Willie Howard's experience in ACT II when his teacher was caught up in the children's boxing match.

Adults (then and reading this now) might not read Mr. Howard's sometimes lax or caught up approach to leading his class as 'fun'. Adults could perceive Mr. Howard's practice of affording students free time as taking students off course and veering away from classroom norms and course goals. Others might view this as having low expectations of students. But the children saw this as an opportunity to take a rest from the stresses of schooling (i.e., Willie laid his head on the desk) or to connect with their teacher. Either way, there is evidence to suggest that although Mr. Howard had fun with the youngsters, he was no slacker teacher. In a group oral history interview with once-children of Hopewell, once-child Amanda McKinstry, describes Mr. Howard as a diligent, and knowledgeable history teacher who appears to have been quite the task master.

> And, um, uh, Mr. Roy Howard. He was our history teacher, and he was a strange big fella, but he, he was okay. He would always say, *"Let us focus our attention on page 152."* (She emulates Howard's voice, shifting her voice to a very deep tone with a professional proper diction and then laughs). And he had a, had a little thing on, you remember, he had a little thing on the end of his tongue and would (Sucks teeth making a ticking sound, which ignites group laughter). He did! (Laughing and in an affirming fond tone). And remember- when he, when, when the, when he was working, he would take four fingers and he would slap me on the shoulder.
>
> And then you know, he was the person that never had to look in the book. He knew the book by heart. He could tell you what paragraph, what line, and if you missed a word, he could have you go back to it without even looking in the book.
>
> When he, when, when the, when he would whoop you, he would take four fingers and he would slap me on the shoulder. (Laughs)
> That's how he'd whup you. Remember Beatrice was funny- was in the class, and Mr. Howard said, "I want you to focus your page to 152 and we're going to study-" and Beatrice say (starts singing), *"It's been a harrrrrd day..."* (Group burst into laughter) she started singing! (Laughs)
> In the middle of class (said in disbelief and with chuckles)! I mean she was always special, but she just bust out and started singing. Mr. Howard called up there, "Ught, ught," with them four fingers and whooped her.

Amanda's account illustrates that Mr. Howard was no slacker. He also required students to "focus their attention." She observed that he had deep knowledge of the text, "he knew the book by heart" down to the "paragraph" and the "line." Nevertheless, Amanda also recalled the dance between serious study and play that was going on in Mr. Howard's class. As he held a serious tone when instructed the class to "turn to page 152," one student, Beatrice, stages her own protest. She burst into The Beatles song, "It's Been a Hard's Day Night." The lyrics begin:

> It's been a hard day's night, and I've been working like a dog
> It's been a hard day's night, I should be sleeping like a log…"

While Mr. Howard tells the students let's get to work by instructing them to open their

Figure 38 Geraldine Finch sitting at the front of Mr. Howard's 10th grade class (front left). Mr. Howard is pictured standing in the rear of the class. 1963. Geraldine Finch Collection.

books, Beatrice blurts out a song that embodied her feelings associated with the labor of Mr.

Howard's class and schoolwork. As she and her classmates turned to page 152, they would prepare themselves to be 'working like a dog' and like Willie proclaimed in the opening of this scene, she'd rather be relaxing 'sleeping like a log.' But too, in some ways, Beatrice's rendition of the Beatles was a compliment to Mr. Howard – she and her classmates were feeling a sense of being called to learn and the difficult nature of learning – and Beatrice put it to song.

Nevertheless, from a youngster's perspective, Beatrice's move was a bold move to temporarily insert comic relief into the course. Amanda recalls the outright audaciousness of Beatrice to blurt out this song in the middle of class. But she did. Amanda's recollection of Mr. Howard's response was a practice mixed in reprimand and play. He calls her to the front of the class for a 'whoopin'' which was four fingers, tap-tapped, to the shoulder.

Children recall using Mr. Howard's class to ignite a bit of hooky in class. Children used various shenanigans to transform Mr. Howard's class into a space for rest, banter, and playful protest. In the next seen, children launch various shenanigans to abandon the classroom and engage in full on hooky – right out the back door.

ACT III: Playing Hooky

The following scene below I illustrate a once-children's shenanigans of playing hooky. This illustration reveals once-children's vantages and perspectives related to their experiences playing hooky and motivations for doing so.

Scene I: 10 Boys, 2 Cigarettes

Mr. O'Neal Lark

> Right behind the [Hopewell] gym. And the football field, you got a little drop off down in there, and a wooded area. Well, we had a little stuff back there, we had a little stuff that we had made back there, we'd go back there and hang out, we had a place that we could sit, and it, all, it was nice, we had a little place, a little camp

> out back there. But once my grandmother found out about it, it was over. Over for me.
>
> [My friends] would not let me go, because like I said, I was the youngest in the class. Well, one of the youngest in my class. There was this one other young girl, about the same age as me. But, uh—She [my grandmother] came, she came to the spot.
>
> Yeah, I mean, what you need, oh we gonna have a look out, so you know. So, when the guy came down, he said, "Somebody's coming!" Well we didn't know exactly who it was, so we were still down there smoking cigarettes, you know. And, we probably had, two cigarettes, for about 10 guys.
>
> And, uh, she [grandmother] finally got down there, she called my name, and she didn't come into the little camp where we were, you know, but, it was a little dangerous getting in there, you, uh, you had to know your way around to get in there, we had the kind of camouflage and stuff.
>
> She called my name and I was, "Oh Lord." My heart just almost jumped out my chest, so I did, I finally walked, and she says, "Just come on up this hill, boy! Come on up this hill!" And you know, back in those days, you wasn't hard headed, somebody needed you to come, you come. Well, back up the hill I go. She marched me right to the class that I supposed to be in, and all my classmates just burst out, just started laughing when I walked in. Oh, that was the most embarrassing, your grandmother bringing you back to class.
>
> So, after that day, it wasn't any more skipping class. I couldn't go with the guys anyway. If I skipped class, I had to find somewhere else to go, so I just- That's over with, uh, that was all, that was history, so they just told me, "No, man. Uh-uh."

O'Neal's portrait illustrated the silly, high-spirited nature of he and his friend's efforts to *sneak away*. The boys carved out their own space – beyond the gym, beyond the football field. Lark's description of this 'wooded area' as 'nice' signals the children's feelings toward the space they created. It was cozy, secluded, a hangout place – perhaps different than other school spaces like the gym or football field where play would have happened but would have been organized and closely aligned with student performances verses the free play the boys designed. In other words, the gym and football field spaces included play, but the play would have been organized and designed by adults and the school. On the other hand, the boys dug out, described by Lark as

"our little place," "a little camp," was a small piece of space on the school landscape solely envisioned and created by kids. The camp was a space for kids, by kids.

There would have been a lot involved in creating this out of school space for kids, by kids. In fact, O'Neal's description of the fort suggested the boys put forth great effort to plan and build their relaxation station. O'Neal paints a vivid picture of a secluded place, down a hill, in the woods. It was a bit dangerous to climb in and the boys took great care to camouflage their meeting spot. They even had a 'look out.' The children would have had to imagine this space before taking on the challenge. They would have needed to know the landscape and determine the right space. Determining the right space would have involved getting consensus among the ten comrades. There would have been planning – the space needed to be inconspicuous, comfortable for ten bodies, nice, near the school. Although school was the meeting place for the boys, the fort would have needed to be "camouflaged" and far enough away from the school so that the group would be undetectable. They would need security: a lookout. The boy chosen to be the lookout would need to have keen senses, be attentive to the surroundings and stay alert, after all they had to be safe and protected from potential intruders, including those adults who were otherwise committed to the demise of their play by carrying them back to school.

The boy's creation of the camp also exemplifies a desire to explore and express a bit of independence by expanding the boundaries of school to include childhood, as well as pushing boundaries set by adults. Once-children throughout the study are very clear: they were expected to attend school. But too, in attending school, children also are clear that they wanted school to be fun. Defying expectations to perform student roles was one way to push boundaries.

And to increase the fun in the boy's relaxation station, the boys ever so slightly crossed a boundary between boyhood and manhood by grabbing the opportunity to orchestrate just a few

puffs on a cigarette. Because the ten boys only had two cigarettes, I imagined perhaps it had been difficult to get the cigarettes. The fact that the 10 boys only had two cigarettes suggests that it may have been difficult to launch this shenanigan. Did one of the boys have to engage a bit of mischief – perhaps lifting the cigarettes from their grandfather's pocket? Or maybe from their mother's purse? However, the boys got the cigarettes – the efforts of ten boys (i.e., twenty hands, and one-hundred fingers), they could only get two. Nevertheless, to smoke these two cigarettes, the boys mount a camp of safety, snuggled into the perfect getaway patch of childhood freedom – a fort, hidden only walking distance from the school. Inside, they would laugh, talk, relax and get at least two or three puffs off the smokes. Their social world would expand and deepen as they shared a metaphoric victory lap fueled by their collective ability to create this new and fun space – a man cave of sorts – built by boys, where boys could pretend to be men and relish in the feeling they created together.

Finally, the boy's feelings of togetherness were infiltrated by Lark's Grandma. Lark's description of his grandmother blowing his cover, reveals a 14-year-old child wanting to express independence, but who still embodies young naïveté (i.e., lack of experience, wisdom, and judgement) as he was very much fearful of adults (“my heart almost jumped out my chest”). O’Neal, as a child, made no fuss about his grandmother retrieving him and returning him to school. Because of his fear and respect for Grandma, he was willing to be guided, reprimanded, and returned to order. But too, Lark admits it was not his Grandmother's reprimand that kept him from playing hooky again. Rather, Lark had been eternally banished by his comrades. The boys would no longer allow him to join their escapes of cutting. Lark's presence had become a risk for adult infiltration and so, he lost his belonging with the group when they cut school. In other

words, his peers determined he could not play hooky anymore – at least not with them. Grandma's infiltration of the camp meant his cutting days were done.

Although Lark was eventually found out, his efforts to play hooky illustrate his friend's and his efforts to challenge school norms using school hours to not do school. Instead, the boys used school hours to have fun and to engage in a bit of mischief cutting school. But in their cutting, Lark illustrates spirited children who were acting on their desires to create extra time to enjoy one another's company, relax and innocently pretend to be men in a little dug out not far from the schoolhouse.

Closing Remarks

Data shows once-children imagined school as a stage to perform childhood. On the school stage, Black children launched shenanigans that forwarded their more expansive vision for school. This vision did not remain fixed in performances of their student roles but rather students saw their roles as more fluid. Essentially, they could not only be students – they could also be children. In their roles as children, they could use school as a stage where childhood could spread out and act out comradery and fun. On the playground they could abandon their school clothes and get happily dirty, they could get lost in their own curiosities and imagine things others could not see or hear (i.e., like a jack rock conjuring the sound of a plane in the sky), they could take to the halls socialize, strut, and represent school spirit, get a bit crooked – taking chances to engage in a bit of childish romantic mischief. In classrooms they could play pranks on the teacher, sign up for courses to be near their friends and elaborate upon romantic play, or get the teacher engaged in lively conversation about anything but books. They also expanded and explored spaces to perform childhood by playing hooky right on the school

grounds. In sum, they were committed and agentic in their ability to play in school and on school grounds launching shenanigans with delight.

Shenanigans are defined as "secret or dishonest activity or maneuvering" and "silly or high-spirited behavior; mischief."[305] The various shenanigans: silly, secret, maneuvering, high spirited, or mischievous actions undertaken by once-children to push against and disrupt the rules and norms of school that sought to constrain them or define them first as students. These once-children recalled, often with glee, how they or peers tested these adult imposed boundaries and wiggled out of class or their disciplined roles as students. For those seeking to wiggle out of class, did not in fact have to leave the classroom - their shenanigans allowed for some to play a version of hooky right in class.

Additionally, Black children's desires to be playfully agentic and construct their own social world via launching shenanigans reveals how children also embodied unknowingness and naivete in their performance of play. Evidence demonstrates that some children did not make the correlation between school attendance and the potential adverse impacts on their academic success. In other words, as children living in their "now," the desire to extend play in multiple spaces (some of which were outside of school) sometimes trumped any of their future constructions of self which would have been more aligned with the performance of student identities.

305 Retrieved from https: Google Dictionary

Chapter VII | Discussion

Most scholars now believe we understand how Black children experienced pre-Brown school segregation. It is true that we have developed voluminous historical records that detail competing perspectives and practices related to whether and for what reasons Black children should have access to education. Historians of education have also documented the nature of segregated Black schools, including the physical conditions, teacher quality, content of the curriculum and the nature of extra-curricular activities. And outside of documenting how these institutions sought to support the achievement of these youth and their preparation for adulthood, the children themselves were rarely the focus of these investigations.

Scholars also rarely relied on testimony of these same children. And when they did such testimony focused on what was being done on children's behalf. Children's testimony revealed little about how they otherwise experienced these segregated settings or how they themselves may have animated these settings and what it may have felt like as a child to be in these schools and a part of these school communities. Absent such testimony, we are provided an inadequate window into Black children's childhood experiences and agency in and around segregated schools.

Hence, with this dissertation I set out to examine the experiences of Black children in and around what was the most prolific articulation of the Black segregated school, Rosenwald Schools. Focusing on the Rosenwald Schools of Pickens County Alabama, my goal was to illuminate what these childhood experiences revealed about how Black children may (or may not have) have influenced the culture and/or organization of these pre-Brown educational settings.

And in foregrounding the perspectives of the children themselves, I sought to develop distinct or nuanced understandings of who Black children were in these school spaces and how they helped to animate the tenor and the tone of these spaces and their surround. In Chapter II, I argued that Black children were previously rendered paper dolls on the landscape of educational history.[306] I postulated that by examining the voices and perspectives of Black once-children via their oral histories and material objects from childhood, we might be provided a window into their childhood experiences and agencies as understood by them when they attended Rosenwald Schools during the Jim Crow Era. Indeed, my examination of Black of children's voices (in retrospect and in-time) and also materials, I established a window into their experiences and agencies as they were articulated in and around the Rosenwald Schools in Pickens and how they themselves animated these settings.

My findings reveal in navigating areas associated with school (most notably the road to school) Black children had to physically navigate poor conditions that were more suitable for adults. Black children therefore found themselves laboring through or the trekking to school each day. While one might imagine, during the Jim Crow era, this labor would have mostly entailed battling the threat of racism day to day, once-children report the daily battle they most remembered was with the elements. Once-children testified having to traverse hills and little valleys, walk distances of "over a mile… or two… or three," tackling lands that held rust, dirt, and ditches, wading over wet ground and sometimes being stopped altogether by high waters that prevented them from moving forward. As they trekked, Black children's bodies – their legs, feet, toes, arms, faces, cheeks, hands – took on the bite of the cold. Whether walking or "standing in

306 Vanessa Siddle Walker, Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1996); Mary S Hoffschwelle, The Rosenwald Schools of the American South (University Press of Florida, 2006).

the cold and the rain" waiting for the bus, once-children recall getting to school "just aching" and huddling their bodies around the potbelly stove together in the classroom. Along the way, at least one once-child recalls also having to face fears as she had to walk past a neighbor's dog daily. While another once-child hints at the dangers the "woods woods woods" presented in its sheer magnitude – towering over children's young bodies. Others, who were not able to attend school often (due to sharecropping) would feel the ache (i.e., anxiety) of being behind (e.g., one child felt stomach pains).

On the trek, shoes would get chewed up by the road and would soon be "flappy." It was common practice to put cardboard in the bottoms to preserve one's only pair of school shoes (which were only worn for school). When it rained, "clothes would be wet or you just couldn't go" to school. Through their voices and experiences, Black once-children provide a window into their vulnerability and innocence in the face of the poor conditions they faced on the trek to school.

Having drawn back the veil on the burdensome conditions that revealed their everyday experiences of vulnerability and innocence while traveling to school, their memories also revealed the agency with which they navigated these harsh conditions. These youngsters were, indeed, agentic. They traversed the land, using the will of their bodies, the energy of their comrades, and their knowledge of the path to school to go forward. Black children tracked on waypoints that marked the way forward. They endured the inclement weather – stopping at a waypoint (i.e., a neighbor's home) to warm their hands or just enduring until they hit the schoolhouse door and could huddle around the potbelly stove in the classroom. They relied on their comrades to feel the energy of moving forward – the sensation felt walking with the sheer number of young bodies "filling the road." They were in the flow of their ancestors who had also

once tried to set out on the path to school but could only go so far due to racial and economic oppression; it was their turn to carry the baton – and hopefully go further. Evidence also shows that although the youngsters were agentic in getting themselves to school, they were not alone and unsupported in these efforts. In fact, in the eyes of their parents and the Black community the children's agency did not eclipse their need for supports and protections for which all children are worthy. The adults therefore, validated their worthiness by providing safeguards and care which would underwrite the children's agency to face the rugged conditions. While the children leveraged their agency to get to school every day, adults stepped in as personal escorts or directed older children to ensure the safe passage of younger children. They built makeshift bridges over high waters, advocated to have rugged roads paved, and successfully petitioned for their children to have school buses. Importantly, their childhood status was not only reified via the supports and protections they received from adults, but also in light of how they took up their trek to school.

In Chapter IV findings illustrate that although the conditions were poor and required labor – Black children imagined the road to school as an opportunity to engage their natural childish proclivities. Although the often unforgiving, conditions of the road was not a space designed for children, Black children made it a province for childhood. There they indulged their desires to play and relished in being young. For them, the road was associated with school and usually devoid of adult presence and thereby defined as a space for children. In this space, Black children felt comradery, belonging, delight and drama journeying forward with their schoolmates. As they journeyed together, they indulged their playful agencies -- played with dirt or ice, depending on the season, pulled at leaves and flowers, and lost a sense of time (a more adult preoccupation).

Liberties to enact childish agencies were not, however, limited to fun and games. The road to school also offered the opportunity to engage in and navigate childhood dramas (e.g., courting, scrimmaging, and fighting). Through these various social interactions, Black children tested one another – tested boundaries between the younger children and the older ones; tested strength via friendly physical scrimmages to see who was stronger; tested their ability to set and navigate social boundaries (i.e., protecting themselves, or others) that were steeped with moral considerations (e.g., "I didn't want to fight." Or I didn't believe in fighting). Furthermore, Black children had to navigate dramas brought on by the outside world – particularly colorism and socio-economic differences among their classmates.[307]

While most once-children indicated a deep sense of family among their classmates, there were also instances where once-children indicate they felt picked on because of skin color or belongings (e.g., a coveted article of clothing) which signaled social differentiation and stratification among the children. Depending upon the nature of the drama, these childhood experiences varied between scandal (peeping at older children courting), excitement (scrimmages), trouble (fights) and conflict (status clashes). No matter the drama or the experience it ensued, Black children, on the road to school, experienced the freedom to enact their childish agency in natural and developmentally appropriate ways.

In Chapter VI, findings show that Black children's articulation of their childish agency did not stop upon entering the schoolhouse doors. Once-children explained that school was one of the few places where they could "just be with our friends."[308] So, while the adults around them

[307] Note all children mention although some families had more resources than others, mostly everyone was poor.

[308] Betty Warren Windham, Oral History Interview, interview by Kimberly Ransom, n.d.

may have been singularly focused on school as a place for learning and where the children could commit to their role as students, the children also perceived school as a stage to perform play. In addition, to enacting their status as students, school was a space where they could enter their own social world and experience youthful freedoms. The stage to play was both on the playground and inside the schoolhouse. On the playground, Black children frolicked with abandon, transforming the land around them into opportunities for fun. On an otherwise empty playground, once-children reported how they had reimagined found objects and repurposed them to accommodate their whims and playful desires. A piece of cardboard could become a sled, and dirt could be snow.

A discarded jack against the side of the schoolhouse could be a conduit to hear the sound of planes in the sky. A discarded chair could become a hoe, and the ground beneath it – a farm for children to plant and tend. A mother's old girdle could be a basketball net, and a discarded bike wheel a rim. "Boys would come to class with a pocket full of marbles, … pretty marbles." The boys used to "keep the ground swept smooth" so marbles could be played and traded with precision. Young fingers would grab their marbles and jacks as children gathered around for a game. Neat and tidy school clothes could be disregarded as the desire to play could bust up any expectation to remain pristine for one's student role. Others might play, "Hide and Go Seek," "Pop the Weasel," "jumped rope," or "hopscotch." The playground was also a space for scrimmages, where boys could put their growing bodies to the test by engaging in playfights or boxing with another boy – to see who was the mightiest. And at least one child felt the playground was a space to practice his art (i.e., photography) and document the lives of his comrades in action around him.

Inside the schoolhouse findings show, once-children's embrace of their childish freedoms that defied the norms and rules of schools and how students were to comport themselves. They played in hallways, played in class, and out the back door during school hours. Some of their in school play involved in-school courting in romantically youthful or decidedly childish ways. Other times they creatively and mischievously carved out time to relax in school – essentially playing hooky right in class. Instead of having to stick to their student role which was to "get their lesson," they could take a break and connect with their teacher which they described as "fun" or entertain their classmates with bold physical antics they employed to prank the teacher (e.g., boldly jumping in and out of the classroom window behind the teacher's back).

And then finally, findings show some of the youngsters played right on out the school's back door. Testing boundaries, some children repurposed the time allotted for school to find more time to hang with their friends – again playing hooky but this time outside of the schoolhouse but still on school grounds via school time. Across these experiences, Black children illustrate their agency to influence what life would have felt like and looked like in these segregated schools of the south as well as those spaces that were essentially school (related) spaces as per the vantage of children (i.e.,, the walk to school and the playground). In these spaces, Black children's status as children was confirmed by the childish ways their agency was enacted and how the adults around them sought to afford them the supports and protections for which all children are worthy.

Empirical Contributions

These findings confirm some of what we know about how Black children experienced Black segregated schools. In sharing their oral histories, once-children indicated that as students of Pickens County Rosenwald Schools, they experienced fewer or inferior resources (e.g., second

hand books, secondhand or no busing, no playground equipment). Previous research has documented the inequitable schooling conditions Black children experienced during slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow.[309] The schooling conditions Black children experienced in Pickens is consistent with these findings in illustrating the ways Black children were denied public supports and protections that have otherwise been imagined for children.

This study further provides evidence that Black children attending Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County also experienced conditions in and around school that would normally align with adulthood, not childhood. For example, Black children in this study recall the ills of sharecropping and its direct impact on schooling attendance as many children, in varying degrees, had to stay out of school for days, weeks or months at a time to sharecrop. These findings support historical research on African American education (and history of African Americans more generally) that has shown Black children suffered similar conditions as adults in the racial and economic oppression of the Jim Crow South which included having to take on adult labor such as sharecropping.[310]

But also, this dissertation extends what we know about the conditions Black children have experienced in and around schools. Findings illustrate the every day conditions Black children experienced just getting to school. Black children's accounts of their experiences navigating these conditions show Black children faced specific burdens as they trekked to school. Conditions on the walk to school were more suited for "rust and wagons" than children. Of greatest significance, is that Black children's escapades facing these conditions illuminate

309 2/4/21 3:24:00 PM

310 Theodore Rosengarten and Theodore Rosengarten, All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw (University of Chicago Press, 2000); Wilma King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America (Indiana University Press, 2011).

their vulnerability and innocence and thus their childhood status and also their power as children. Wide open to the rough conditions, Black children's frailty and agency become pronounced. Specifically, when faced with these rough conditions (e.g., inclement weather, long distances, course terrain) we see Black children's agency as they are persevering towards the schoolhouse; but too, we see their frailty in the face of these adult conditions acknowledged via the support garnered from adults (Black parents and Black community members) who levied everyday actions to make the road more amenable (e.g., creating make-shift bridges, providing escorts, shapeshifting homes and cars into waiting stations sheltering children from the rain and cold) for the little ones to pass through.

Relatedly, previous historical research on African American education has focused on the racial conditions Black children experienced on the road to school, namely how Black children experienced inadequate or no busing and how they were subjected to racial violence and tormenting along the walk.[311] This research documents Black children's experiences of poor conditions and racial incidents between home and school, and finds home and school were places that shielded Black children from racial abuse. My study extends this research by illuminating that Black children in Pickens also experienced supports and protections on the path between home and school, and that adults' responses to their frailty on the walk to school signaled to Black children they were worthy of support, and protection.

Taken together, these findings illustrate despite childhood being situated primarily as the property of whiteness these findings make evident the Black child as exactly that – a child with

311 Stephen A. Berrey, "Resistance Begins at Home: The Black Family and Lessons in Survival and Subversion in Jim Crow Mississippi," Black Women, Gender & Families 3, no. 1 (2009): 65–90.

the same proclivities and vulnerabilities of any child – proclivities and vulnerabilities that are evidenced loudly despite structural and social conditions that sought to stymie this status.

Findings also show that while children certainly see school as a space to [KR2] perform their role as a student (i.e., pursue their academics and get a good education), they also view school as a space that provides a unique opportunity to employ their desires to perform childhood. Specifically, data illustrates once-children's expressed desire to play, and actions to do so via the launching of various shenanigans including playing hooky and constructing play spaces (i.e., turning school spaces into spaces for their amusement and fun). In playing hooky, once-children would launch shenanigans outside of school that allowed for their continued exploration of play with and among their peers (and sometimes with their teachers). In converting school spaces to play spaces, once-children used play to transform or expand in-school spaces beyond their formal academic purpose. These actions reveal black children's agency to play [or their play agency] which they used to engage and shape *their* social world in and around schools and in ways that transcended the rules and expectations of the adults around them. Black children's efforts to play – to feel and do play – is also particularly powerful because their play is performed on a racist social and political landscape that otherwise engulfs their lives and refuses to imagine, see, affirm, or allow black childhood to exist.

Conceptual Contributions

Findings from this study also expand what we understand about how Black children educated in the Jim Crow south imagined the purpose of schooling for themselves. Finding show Black children imagined the purpose of schooling more expansively than what has been previously documented. Herein I demonstrate that Black children imagined school and spaces associated with school as spaces to take up their liberties to express their childhoods. Black once-

children's oral histories and material objects show that they imagined schooling as a place where their natural developmental proclivities to be children could and did flourish. Through their play, and shenanigans children used their humanity as children to expand schooling beyond academics and moral lessons and scholastic preparations designed to prepare them for adulthood. Instead, the children made room for their childhoods in the present tense. These findings extend historical education research that documents the ways Black education was imagined by adults (reformers, policymakers, administrators, teachers, etc.) and also evidences how Black education was being imagined by Black children growing up in the Jim Crow South and attending Rosenwald Schools.

Historical educational research has focused on adults/ (teachers, administrators, reformers, etc. conceptions of the purpose of schooling across eras of slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow.[312] Foundations studies show that in the past schooling was imagined as ill-suited for Black children (e.g., Black children were thought unable to learn), or alternatively as spaces that might either quell Black children's presumably aggressive or dangerous nature or cultivated their ability to labor as adults.[313] This research has documented the multitudinous ways Black

312 King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America; Wilma King, African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights (Springer, 2005); James D Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935 (Univ of North Carolina Press, 1988); Ronald E Butchart, Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876 (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2010); E. Franklin Frazier, Negro Youth at the Crossways: Their Personality Development in the Middle States. (New York: Schoken Books, 1967); Charles S. Johnson, Growing up in the Black Belt., 1941; Allison Davis and John Dollard, Children of Bondage: The Personality Development of Negro Youth in the Urban South, n.d.

313 King, African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights; King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America; Henry Allen Bullock, History of Negro Education in the South (JSTOR, 1967); Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935; Heather Andrea Williams, Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2009); Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (Modern Library Classics (Paper), 2000); Ronald E Butchart, Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875 (Praeger Pub Text, 1980); Christopher M Span and James D Anderson, "The Quest for 'Book Learning': African American Education in Slavery and Freedom," A Companion to African American History, 2005, 295.

children have been disrespected historically. Historical public and policy debates regarding whether black children should receive education and what the purpose of that education should be given their lowered status in American society[314] illustrate the extent to which the humanity of black children has been denied. Via these debates Black children have been deemed unable to imagine, unable to create, unable to learn and intrinsically dangerous. Such characterizations, whether implicit or explicit, justified educational inequality. Although some scholarship has tracked on this dehumanizing nature of these debates, researchers have not given close attention to exposing empirically the humanity of Black children. This study documents Black children's historical experiences as told by them and expands historical imaginings of Black children in the history of education to include the humanity of Black childhoods. This provides an empirical story that counters historical imaginings of Black children as less than human or unagentic or otherwise adultified in their (presumably dangerous) expressions of agency, thusly expanding what we understand about Black children and Black childhood in the historiography of Black education.

Relatedly, this study also contributes to and extends historical education research that has aimed to revise deficit understandings of Black schools by illuminating the value of Black schools. Findings from this study contribute to and extend our understanding of the culture and organization of Rosenwald Schools. The study confirms the value of teachers as they were imbuing Pickens Rosenwald Schools with a caring approach and messages of academic

314 Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935; Bullock, History of Negro Education in the South; Ellis O. Knox, "The Origin and Development of the Negro Separate School," The Journal of Negro Education 16, no. 3 (1947): 269, https://doi.org/10.2307/2966333; Karen L. Riley, "'A Toilet in the Middle of the Court House Square': The Summer Teaching Institute of 1915 and the Influence of Booker T. Washington on Negro Teacher Education in Alabama," Education and Culture 18, no. 1 (2002): 2–9; Samuel Leonard Smith, Builders of Goodwill: The Story of the State Agents of Negro Education in the South, 1910 to 1950 (Tennessee Book Company, 1950).

achievement. Also, the study extends our understandings of school by illuminating the value of Black children as in the case of some teachers they imagined school more expansively and took playful actions to relax school norms and enliven school culture so that school might also support children in taking up their childhood and not only their student status.

For Black children attending schools in Pickens County, Alabama, the function of school was not just to prepare for adulthood and the future – school was a space to be a child now. Previous research in the effort to revise deficit narratives about Black segregated schools, homed in on children's testimonies related to Black teachers' devotion to Black children, namely their caring approach and support of Black children's academic achievement.[315] The findings herein suggests that Black teachers at times also supported and engaged Black children beyond academic and adult preparations. This study's once-children also validate the ways that school personnel enabled or established opportunities where childhood could spread out and play.

These finding raise questions about the past significance of schooling in the lives of Black children's social/emotional worlds and asks us to consider how Black schools, in addition to providing care, and academic supports, may have been well positioned to provide space for Black children to experience their humanity and their status as children. This is important considering how black children are rarely discussed, imagined, or portrayed as children in public or academic discourse.

[315] Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*, 1996; Irvine and Fraser, "Warm Demanders."

Theoretical Contribution/Connections

This study adds Black children's historical childhood experiences and agencies to the historiography of Black education by putting the focus on the voices and products of Black children. As the study examines Black children's voices and materials related to their childhood experiences, we are able to empirically see Black children's childhoods – namely, their innocence, vulnerability, and childish agencies in and around school. Furthermore, we are able to see how Black children's childish actions in Pickens Rosenwald Schools and spaces associated with school extended conceptualizations of schooling during the Jim Crow era. This is important when we consider Black children's voices have been sparsely documented in history. Studies in education that foreground Black children rarely make central Black children's expressions of childhood. Dumas et. al. maintains that in part this may be because education studies have focused on Black children's futures rather than who they are right now.[316] They argue Black children are much more than who they are preparing to become as adults and that to overlook who they are now turns a blind eye to who Black children are right now. Essentially, "we have created a world in which Black [children] cannot be."[317] The children in this study illuminate that for children, "to be" right now is everything. To be a child is to have comrades, to feel belonging, to test your body, to have the fresh feeling of holding hands and liking someone, to explore, to be creative and transform otherwise ordinary spaces into social worlds where children's childhood agencies can thrive naturally. This study highlights the significance of applying critical childhood studies frameworks in historical education research to examine Black children's

316 Michael J. Dumas and Joseph Derrick Nelson, "(Re)Imagining Black Boyhood: Toward a Critical Framework for Educational Research," Harvard Educational Review; Cambridge 86, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 27-47,155-156.

317 Dumas and Nelson, 28.

experiences and perspectives related to their schooling in the past. Applying CCS to oral histories and artifacts allowed for a focused and keen attention to past childhood experiences and actions. As the framework calls for explorations of children's experiences and agency independent of adults, CCS "gives importance to what children say, think, and feel, and who they are as full participants in social processes, not just who and what they are becoming."[318] My dissertation study illustrates that a CCS framework can be applied to the study of children in the past. This is critical for historical studies that foreground Black children and childhood given the sparse documentation of their histories in education and more broadly. CCS provides a framework that can challenge historians of education to search for and make central the nuanced experiences of Black children in the long-ago.

Methodological Contributions

My study shows that it is important for historians interested in examining marginalized communities to imagine the "archive" more expansively. In my study, for example, I explored eight institutional archives (national and local) looking for Black childhood. However, most of the relevant archival data I found to support my period of study was from sources within the Black community – in the archival closets of my participants. By archival closets, I mean the private collections of my participants. It is within their collections that I was able to source primary documents (e.g., yearbooks, memory books) and visual materials (e.g., photographs) that captured the experiences or voices of Black children. This is significant for historians who aim to tell untold or seldom told histories of marginalized groups. Our research efforts must be critical.

318 Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, "Translating Childhoods: Immigrant Youth, Language, and Culture. The Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies," New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2009, 16.

We must actively seek out non-traditional spaces to find voices that have been set aside in more traditional archives but who "often construct their own epistemologies, which may [only] be uncovered through nontraditional methods of historical research."[319]

My use of a critical historian's approach and an ethnohistorical methodology to conduct this study best supported these aforementioned approaches as these methodologies allowed me to braid together critical and creative approaches to collect three different types of data: oral histories, material objects, and archival documents. As a critical historian I was challenged "to look beneath the surface," for data.[320] And, using an ethnohistorical approach I was challenged to "draw on many different kinds of testimony."[321] I could not assume Black children's past could only be found in institutional archives. Historians of African American childhoods argue that Black children's childhoods are rarely present in institutional archives.[322] Hence, creative approaches become critical in this empirical work. My study illustrates in particular, the promise ethnohistorical methods pose in studying the educational past of Black children. Ethnohistorical methods have been primarily applied to the study of Native American Peoples and most recently LatinX peoples. Given my study, I maintain ethnohistorical methodologies present a promising

319 D. P. Alridge, "The Dilemmas, Challenges, and Duality of an African-American Educational Historian," Educational Researcher 32, no. 9 (December 1, 2003): 31, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032009025.

320 Derrick P. Aldridge, "The Dilemmas, Challenges, and Duality of an African-American Educational Historian," Educational Researcher 32 (2003): 31, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032009025.

321 William S. Simmons, "Culture Theory in Contemporary Ethnohistory," Ethnohistory 35, no. 1 (1988): 10, https://doi.org/10.2307/482430.

322 Corinne T. Field et al., "The History of Black Girlhood: Recent Innovations and Future Directions," The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth 9, no. 3 (2016): 383–401, https://doi.org/10.1353/hcy.2016.0067; King, African American Childhoods: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights; King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America; Saidiya Hartman, Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval (WW Norton & Company, 2019).

approach to data collection for scholars interested in studying histories of Black childhood in African American education and African American history more broadly.

With specific regard to approaches to accessing Black childhood in the past via oral histories, this study expands methodological approaches to conducting oral history methods by applying Toni Morrison's notion of "rememory" to interview and analysis processes.[323] The use of rememory allowed me to conceptualize how I might access memory as a living past and to explain to my participants my hope to interview their inner-child by collaboratively revisiting their childhood memories which are still living inside them. Using rememory also allowed me to experience stories told to me in interviews as vivid spaces that I could attempt to also enter via sensory, emotive language, and materials. I sought to create interview experiences and ask questions that penetrated layers of memory to get to the thick and felt descriptions where participants found themselves (in their memories) walking through the past. It was in these methodologically created spaces where I could connect to their memories and try to walk with them. For example, in the interview with James Kirkland where he uses a jack rock to feel and hear the sound of jet planes in the sky – I asked him to show me how he did it (and we walked around the building). As we walked, he sunk deeper and deeper into the detail of what he experienced indulging this curiosity as a child.

As his description became more vivid, I developed a vision and sensation connected to his memory too. The interview became more than just a flat recollection of what happened (i.e., he found a jack rock, scratched it on the side of the building and liked the sound). Rather, I could

323 Toni Morrison, “Beloved. 1987,” New York: Plume, 1988, 252; Caroline Rody, “Toni Morrison’s Beloved: History," Rememory," and a" Clamor for a Kiss"," American Literary History 7, no. 1 (1995): 92–119; Divya Tolia-Kelly, “Locating Processes of Identification: Studying the Precipitates of Re-Memory through Artefacts in the British Asian Home,” Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 29, no. 3 (2004): 314–29.

feel his experience as told by him which provided a window into the wonderment, and deep curiosity he felt in the past. Making these efforts in data collection offered participants opportunities to tell their stories in a myriad of ways designed to enliven the past and honor their position as holders of critical knowledge and their humanity as participants.

Although my dissertation study relied on memory data, I understand scholars argue that memory is flawed, and can be unreliable in historical research. This is why I designed the study to triangulate three types of data which could support validation of the study. However, my work contributes to research that maintains memory is a critical source for unearthing the unrecorded and under-recorded histories of marginalized peoples.[324]

324 Aurora Levins Morales, "The Historian as Curandera, JSRI Working Paper #40" (Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, 1997); Tolia-Kelly, "Locating Processes of Identification"; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (Beacon Press, 1995); Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," The American Historical Review 102, no. 5 (1997): 1386–1403.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Figure 39 Absalom L. Neal and 32 enslaved African Americans, Unnamed Ancestors of the Neal Family. United States Census, 1850 Slave.

Appendix B

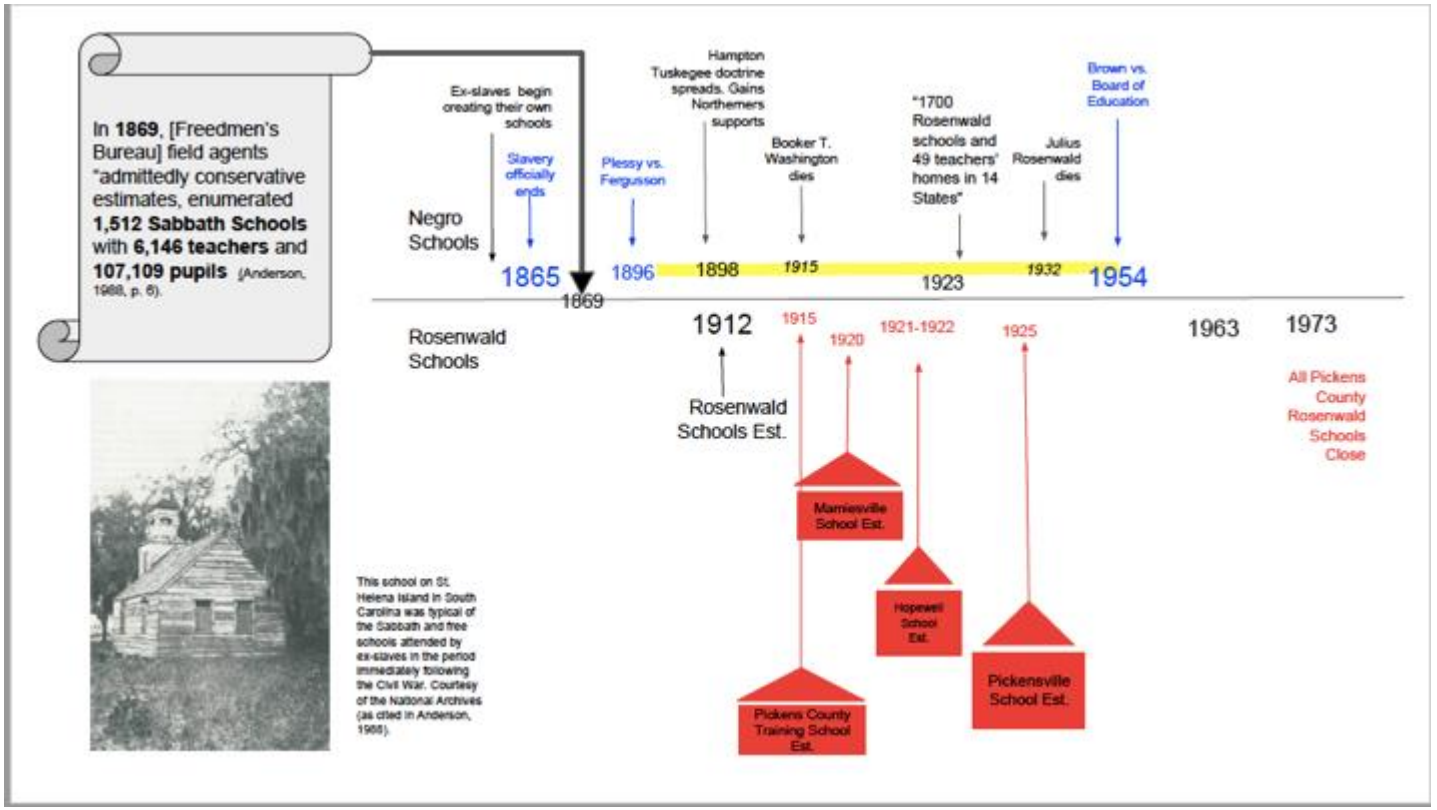
Table 10 Record of the Establishment of Rosenwald Schools in Pickens County, Alabama.

Date Founded	School Historic Name	Type	Notes	Total Costs and Donations
"other"	Elbeleville	Two-teacher type	Built under Tuskegee	Total $712.00 Negroes $212.00 Public $200.00 Rosenwald $300.00
"other"	Salem	Two-teacher type	Built under Tuskegee	Total $675.00 Negroes $175.00 Whites $200.00 Rosenwald $300
"other" 1915 [325]	County Training School (i.e., Pickens County Training School)	Four-teacher type	Built under Tuskegee; Mr. R's pic; 120 Elem library at this school; Home at this school	Total $3,400.00 Negroes $2,650.00 Whites $150.00 Public $300.00 Rosenwald $300.00
"other"	Mannerville School (i.e., Mamiesville School)	Two-teacher type	Built under Tuskegee	Total $2,100.00 Negroes $1,100.00 Public $500.00 Rosenwald $500.00
1925-26	Pickensville School	Two-teacher type	Land (acreage) 3.0 Application #35-E Ins. $2,400	Total $3,350.00 Negroes $1,750.00 Public $900 $Rosenwald $700.00
1921-22	Reform School (i.e., Hopewell School)	Two-teacher type	Land (acreage) 5.00 Application #35-A	Total $3,300 Negroes $2,000 Public $500 Rosenwald $800
1931-1932	Shop at Pickens County Training School	Other	Application #7-K	Total $3,900.00 Negroes $450.00 Public $2,550.00 Rosenwald $900.00
1926-27	Teachers' Home at Pickens County Training School	Other	Application #18-F	Total $3,172.00 Negroes $365.00 Whites $257.00 Public $1,650.00 Rosenwald $900.00

[325] "Carrollton Board of Education, Board Minutes," 1915, Carrollton Board of Education School Board Minutes.

APPENDIX C

Brief Timeline of Pickens County Rosenwald School History in Alabama and the United States.



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